

Small Group Tours

2019/2020

UNIQUE
Japan
TOURS

Experts in Real Japan Travel



Introduction to Unique Japan Tours

Our Story

Unique Japan Tours is a registered and bonded travel agent. Our Managing Director, Darina Slattery, is an Alumni of University of Ulster and the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin. She holds an MBS in International Marketing and a BA in Business with Japanese.



After studying in Japan, Darina developed an expertise in Japanese culture, heritage and traditions. She has lived and travelled extensively throughout Japan. Darina has forged strong cultural relationships

and is the current Chairperson of the Ireland Japan Association.

Combining both theory and practice, Darina created Unique Japan Tours. She has built an international diverse team around her. Their sole purpose is to help you enjoy the attractive, mysterious and adventurous destination that is Japan.

Our Promise

The core values of our company are customer service and customer safety.

We promise to provide first class customer service in assisting you to choose one of our small group or self-guided tours or design a tailor-made tour to match your dreams. When you contact our company your personal travel consultant will be appointed to manage your travel plans.

We promise while you are in Japan that your safety is our number one priority. In the unlikely event of an emergency, or should something of an unforeseen nature occur, our local staff will respond to your every need. This 24/7 customer support will deal with anything from lost luggage to rescheduling itineraries.

We promise that our private guides will assist you in exploring the treats that Japan has in store. Our knowledge and in-depth experience will ensure you are exposed to the wide and diverse culture of Japan. This will make choosing Unique Japan Tours a memorable lifetime experience.

Our Crew

Darina and her team have spent the past twenty years researching and designing exciting adventurous routes throughout Japan. The itineraries are personally designed to embrace Japan's highlights as well as some hidden gems.

The company's head office is based in Dublin with representative offices in London and Tokyo.

We have a long list of others who help us all across Japan (local guides, drivers, assistants at the airport, and so on). Each one of these individuals contribute to making each and every tour unique and personal in its own way. Our wonderful team of local Japanese staff are what make our tours so unique. They bring expert knowledge and a lovely friendly approach to touring Japan. We hope you get to know our team well, while you enjoy your trip with us!

Testimonials



I would like to thank you so much for the wonderful organisation and planning of our holiday to Japan recently. It was truly one my family will remember forever. The shared experiences you organised and recommended were perfect for us. The hotels, inns and ryokans were fantastic and combined perfectly. The guides and drivers you organised reflected well upon you and your company.

(Crawford Family, Australia)





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It was absolutely brilliant! We all fell in love with Japan and the Japanese people. I was a bit worried about going on a self-guided tour but we enjoyed the flexibility of it and the travel pack was very accurate. We loved the hotels, ryokans, and the dinner in Miyajima was splendid. It was very hard to come back to reality and I can't wait to go back.

(McGrath Family, Ireland)



We all had a fantastic trip and when anyone asks I reiterate the outstanding service and commitment of Darina and her associates. Without them, this voyage would not have been possible.

**(Duff & Kent Couples,
New Zealand and France)**

Small Group Tours

Why join a Small Group Tour with Unique Japan Tours?

We plan and operate exclusive Unique Japan 'Small Group Tours' that include many of the country's highlights. We feature some of our own favourite towns, villages and off the beaten track locations. Our team has spent years researching the best places to include on these small group tour itineraries. We have put together a list of unforgettable trips around Japan.

International clients

We welcome clients from all over the world. Our tours start and finish in Japan thereby facilitating arrival from any international airport from anywhere in the world. Our team can arrange for a tailor-made, hassle free, internal transfer within Japan to the start point for our Small Group Tour. Solo adventurers who opt to share accommodation will not be charged single supplement excess. This is subject to our team being able to arrange a share amongst your travelling group.

Off-the-beaten track locations

Each of our tours were lovingly designed by our team of Japan enthusiasts. We have spent years finding the places most consider hidden treasures. Combine years of research with local knowledge and passionate tour leaders, and you get an unforgettable holiday of a life-time to Japan.

High Quality Intimate Group Experience

Let's just say you pay for what you get. We guarantee excellent value for money. Our Small Group Tour policy dictates a minimum of six and maximum of sixteen participants. This ensures access to contemporary chic hotels, rural onsens, family minshuku's, temple lodges and traditional Japanese ryokans. Our local guides will ensure that you sample the culinary delights from each region. This is a mouth-watering experience to ensure your palate tastes everything from the local delicacies to 'Kaiseki' dining in your traditional ryokans.





Passionate Tour Leaders

Each Small Group Tour is led by one of our passionate tour leaders who live or have lived in, know and love, Japan. They speak the language and love the adventure. They are eager to teach you about the lifestyle, foods, people, and tales of being a 'foreigner' in Japan. These hands-on leaders are ready to assist you 24/7 throughout the duration of your tour.

Meet the Locals!

In order for you to get the most out of your time in Japan, we will provide local guides in specific places along the way. These local guides know the best places to eat, drink, shop, and explore. They will educate you on best bits of each town. This local information will prove invaluable in helping you plan how to use your free time.

Scenery & Adventure

Our transfer services will allow you discover deeper valleys and higher mountain tops, unlike when travelling solo using the Japan Rail Pass. You can be assured of a more exhilarating scenic adventure. Our transport services include boat rides, cable cars, private cars and coaches, and not forgetting the super speedy shinkansen (bullet trains)!

This is what makes choosing our Small Group Tours with Unique Japan Tours a memorable lifetime experience.



Testimonials

We really did have a fantastic time with loads of fun and laughs with our fellow travellers and Yuka; as well as experiencing a real insight in to Japanese history, culture and way of life. The tour was brilliantly organised with so many different experiences packed into the two weeks and Yuka was great with her extremely professional, caring and fun approach.
(The Harvey Family, UK)

The holiday was all that we expected - and more. Japan and the Japanese people/ culture became much less "foreign" and more accessible - mainly thanks to our tour guides. Yuka was a delight, thoughtful, kind and efficient. She put us all at our ease and helped the tour group to 'gel' together. The three local guides were all very knowledgeable and were able to answer all queries readily. Thank you all very much for your hard work.
(The Davis Family, Northern Ireland)

Our Travel Style

Meet & Greet

All of our tours start and end in Japan, mostly Tokyo. So you book your own flights. But remember, Osaka and Nagoya Airports are both just a 2 - 2.5 hour bullet train ride to Tokyo. Your travel consultant can arrange this so let us know if we should assist.

You will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel. If your flight arrives later than the scheduled meeting time on Day 1, don't worry. We will arrange for you to catch up or see you the next morning when the real travel starts!

Our pre-departure meeting takes place in the your hotel lobby at 6pm usually. Instructions will be given in your detailed travel pack, which you should receive two weeks prior to the start date. Together with your group, your tour leader will give you a brief orientation before bringing you to a local restaurant nearby for some ice breaking fun (optional, pay for separately).

Sleep & Eat

Western Style – Hotel Categories

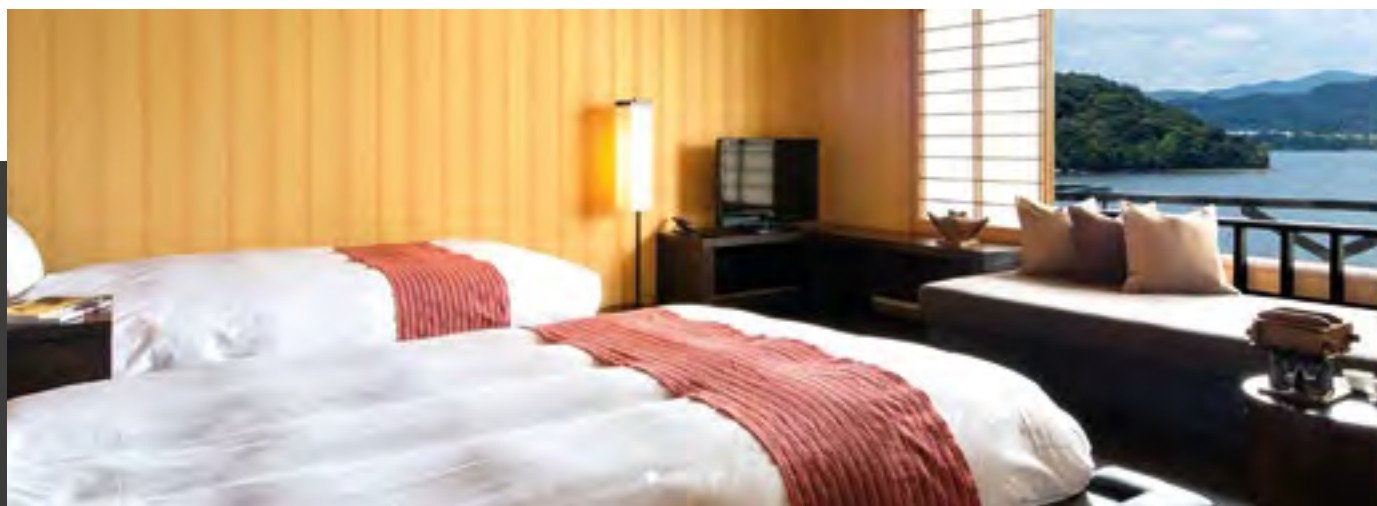
Standard (3*) Western style hotels will be clean, central and convenient for your tour. Room sizes tend to be smaller in the major cities but given the time you spend in them, it doesn't seem to bother people. All rooms (except in some minshiku's or temple lodges) will have an en-suite bathroom as standard.

Superior (4*) Our superior hotel list are top class perfectly located hotels. English speaking facilities, choice of restaurants, breakfast buffet, and bars will be a few steps up from the standard category.

Deluxe (5*) Our range of deluxe hotels will not disappoint. International five star standards can be expected plus more. Many will have swimming pools, plenty of restaurants, larger sized bedrooms, luxurious in-room facilities and concierge / porter services.

Japanese Style – Ryokan, Minishiku, Temple Stays, Mountain Lodges.

Japanese style hotels are called *ryokans*. Smaller more family run properties are known as *minshiku*. All of our tours include at least one night Japanese style, giving you the authentic experience we feel everyone should get while traveling in Japan. Hot spring baths (*onsen*), outstanding cuisine (*kaiseki* dinner), and a uniquely Japanese style hospitality experience (*Omotenashi*) is what awaits you at your ryokan. Some tours will take you to the deepest remote parts of Japan where our choice of stay will be limited, e.g. mountain lodges or Buddhist temples.



Preferred Hotels

LOCATION	STANDARD (3*)	SUPERIOR (4*)	DELUXE (5*)
Tokyo	Shibuya Rei, Candeo Hotels, B Hotels, INNSOMNIA Akasaka Granbell Hotels, Villa Fontaines	Hyatt Regency, Shibuya Excel Hotel, Nikko Daiba Tokyo, New Takanawa Prince, Century Southern Tower	Hoshinoya, Okura, Chinsanzo, Imperial, Cereleun, Park Hyatt, Conrad
Kyoto	Garnet, Machiya Townhouses, Share Hotels, Daiwa Roynet Ekimae, Vista Perier, Mitsui Garden	Nikko Princess, Noku Kyoto, Kanra, Mume, Centurion, Keihan Kyoto, Daiwa Royal Hotel Grande, Villa Aneyakoji, New Miyako, Monterey	Okura, Granvia, Hyatt Regency, Westin, Ritz Carlton.
Osaka	Cross Hotel, The Flag Shinsailashi, Hotel 88, Dormey Inn, Harmonie Embrasse,	Imperial, Granvia, Righa Royal, Nikko	Swiss Hotel, Ritz Carlton, Hyatt Regency, St Regus, Conrad
Hakone	Ichinoya Ryokans	Setsuetsukan Ryokan Hakone Yamano	Hakone Hyatt Regency.
Kanazawa	Daiwa Roynet, Kaname Inn	Ana Crown Plaza , Tokyu, Nikko Hotel	
Takayama	Ouan, Rickshaw Inn, Best Western	Green Hotel, Hagi Takayama, Hoshokaku Ryokan	Takayama Hotel Associa
Miyajima Island	Watanabe Inn, Kikunoya	Biyunoyado, Aki Grand Hotel, Miyajima Grand Hotel, Arimoto, Kinsuikan	Kurayado Iroha
Hiroshima	JAL City	Sheraton Grand Hiroshima	
Fukuoka	Kyushu Hotel Blossom	Hakata Excel Hotel, Leo Palace Hotel	Grand Hyatt Hotel
Okinawa	BW Okinawa Kouki Beach	Righa Royal, Hilton, Sheraton	Busena Terrace Hotel, Ritz Carlton, Hilton
Amami Ooshima	Bashayama Hotel	Bashayama Hotel	
Ishigaki Island	Alaise De Bale Ishigaki	Alaise De Bale Ishigaki	ANA Intercontinental, Club Med
Taketomi Jima	Local Minshiku	Peace Island Hotel	Hoshinoya Resort

We are partnered with hundreds of hotels directly so depending on your tour, we will chose the best hotel available.
The above list is for guideline use only and may be subject to change.

Tour Level

- Sleep: Basic | Travel: Public transport, bullet trains | Fitness: Active & Able.
- Sleep: Standard | Travel: Public transport, bullet trains & private cars/buses | Fitness: Active & Able.
- Sleep: Standard & Superior (combined) | Travel: Public transport, bullet trains & private cars/buses | Fitness: Average.
- Sleep: Superior | Travel: Bullet trains, private travel, & some public | Fitness: Average.
- Sleep: Superior & Deluxe (combined) | Travel: Bullet trains, private travel, & some public | Fitness: Average.

(Above score is for guideline purpose only.
If you are unsure which category suits you, just ask).

Tour Themes

Japan has something for everyone. While most of our tours feature many of the elements below, we feel some tours deserve special notice, e.g. if there is a lot of walking on any tour, 'Hiking' will be listed in the 'theme' section.

- CULTURAL | MUSIC | TRADITIONAL ARTS | HIKING | MOUNTAINS
- GARDENS | MUSEUMS | NATURE | WILDLIFE | PHOTOGRAPHY
- YOUTHFUL | FESTIVALS | FOOD & WINE | FAMILY

Summary of Tours

Tours Available	Interests & Tour Features	Tour Level	Upgrades available?
Hidden Treasures of Japan	Local villages, river valleys, architecture, design, heritage.	●●●●●	yes
Ancient Trails of Japan	Walking, nature, rural experiences, active Japan incl. highlights.	●●●●●	yes
Japan Discovered	Cultural activities, Japanese garden, old world charm, festivals (Apr/Oct), Sumo (May/Sep), world heritage sites.	●●●●●	yes
Traditional & Tropical Japan	Japan's highlights, seasonal treats, world heritage Japan, tropical island paradise.	●●●●●	yes
Gardens & Galleries	Garden, architecture & art enthusiasts.	●●●●●	no
Journey to the East	Ancient Ainu (indigenous minority), rare wildlife, photography, Winter magic, & hot spring heaven.	●●●●●	no
Fuji Rock & Climb	Rock Festival, climb Fuji san, outdoor activities, best Summer experience in Japan.	●●●●●	no
The Northern Trail feat. Sado Island	'Earth Celebration' on Sado Island, vast mountain passes, Japan Alps, another best Summer experience in Japan!	●●●●●	no
Taste Japan	Local markets, cookery demonstrations, street food stalls, vineyards, mitchelin star dining, luxury ryokans, an explosion of the senses.	●●●●●	yes*
Young & Fun Japan	A fun, back street style holiday taking in Japan's must see highlights.	●●●●●	no

*Upgrade available to the Super Deluxe hotels in Tokyo & Kyoto (Kyoto Ritz Carlton or Four Seasons / Tokyo Grand Hyatt, ShangriLa, Mandarin Oriental or similar).



Climate in Japan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tokyo, Mt Fuji, (East)												
Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe (Central Honshu)												
Shikoku, Kyushu, Hiroshima (West & SW)												
Nagano, Takayama, Kanazawa (N. Central)												
Hokkaido (Northern Island)												
Niigata, Yamagata, Akita (N.East Honshu)												
Okinawa, Ishigaki, Amami (Southern Islands)												

Seasonal Mood	Low/High °Celsius
Snowy Mountains	- 10 ~ 5
Sakura Springtime 'Peak Season'	5 ~ 15
Very Pleasant	15 ~ 23
Nicely Hot	23 ~ 33
Hot & Humid	33 ~ 40
Amazing Autumn 'Peak Season'	13 ~ 18
Crisp Blue Skies	2 ~ 10

Our team of Japan travel experts have travelled the length and breath of Japan throughout every season. The above mood board is a result of our own experience and may not be accurate. Not to mention, weather changes are inevitable, so always check The Weather Channel before you travel (www.weather.com).





2019/2020 Tour Dates

	2019																																					
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	
January		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
February					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28						
March					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
April	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30								
					Gardens & Galleries											Japan Discovered																						
May			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					
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		Ancient Trails of Japan																					Fuji Rock & Climb															
		Young and Fun Japan											Hidden Treasures of Japan															Young and										
August				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
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October		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
		Galleries											Japan Discovered																									
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December						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
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	2020																																														
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thr	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue										
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			Taste Japan															Young and Fun Japan																													
February					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29														
							Journey to the East												Hidden Treasures of Japan																												
March						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31											
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June							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30											
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July			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31														
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August					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31												
September		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30																
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Hidden Treasures of Japan

"A tour created to capture the essence of Japan's soul, beauty, and heritage"

12 Nights / 13 Days

Immerse yourself in Japan's ancient past and contrasting present. Visit some of its oldest and most magnificent temples and shrines. Enjoy the contrasting Naoshima Island, home to some of Japan's most innovative and artistic architecture and design. Experience its religious roots first hand as you become acquainted with the monks of Koyasan. Glide through the stunning Iya Valley and Ritsurin Garden. The perfect tour for those in search of a richer travel experience.

Ise Shrine & Mikimoto Pearl Island

After three nights among Tokyo's glittering skyscrapers and back streets of a downtown era, we begin our journey in search of Japan's glorious hidden treasures, travelling by bullet train (shinkansen). Located next to the city of Nagoya, Ise Shrine is Japan's most sacred shrine dating back to the 3rd century. It worships the sun Goddess Amaterasu and is considered to be the spiritual home of the Japanese and its national religion Shinto.

Japan's supreme jewels on Mikimoto Pearl Island were first cultivated in 1893 by Kokichi Mikimoto. Watch the Ama Divers (women divers) demonstrate this long tradition in search for daily treasures

Mt Koya & Nara

From Ise and after a scenic two hour journey, we will arrive at Mt Koya (Koyasan), a sacred site established 1,200 years ago by Kobo Daishi a religious scholar. Koyasan was the spiritual centre of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism and is considered one of the most spiritually rewarding places to visit in the Kansai region. Our local Koyasan guide will take us on a spiritual walk around this mystical setting. Tonight we will sleep in one of Koyasan's 111 temple lodges. Traditionally, these lodges were used to service the devoted pilgrims who walked the '88 Temples of Shikoku'. The mausoleum of Kobo Daishi was the last stop on this pilgrimage, found here in Koyasan. If feeling up to it, you can take part in an evening calligraphy session and/or before breakfast an early morning 'chant' with the monks.

Tokushima & Iya Valley in Shikoku Island

After breakfast, you will sail from Wakayama port to Japan's fourth largest island, Shikoku. Stopping briefly in Tokushima, you can experience 'Indigo Dying', a technique, perfected in the tenth century, still used today.

In the afternoon we venture west into the remote Iya Valley region. This stunning remote setting is centered along the 10km Iya River. It is also known as one of the three largest hidden mountain regions in Japan. A boat ride along the river, crossing the vine bridge, and overnight stay in superior accommodation with hot springs included, are just some of the adventures you will get up to while traveling through Shikoku.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Kyoto/Osaka

Duration: 12 Nights / 13 Day	Ryokan/Minshuku: 3 / 4 Nights
Theme: Cultural, Traditional Arts, Nature, Museums	Code: CP222
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Ages: All Ages
Style: Standard/ Superior	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (3) → Ise & Mikimoto Pearl Island (2) → Mt Koya (1) → Tokushima & Iya Valley (2) → Takamatsu (1) & Naoshima → Kyoto (Osaka) (3)



Takamatsu & Naoshima Island

After two nights in the rural retreat in the Iya Valley, you will move north to the port town of Takamatsu. En route stopping off at Kotohira, a small village most famous for serving Zanuki Udon Noodles. Unknown to many, the oldest Kabuki theatre (Konpira Grand Theatre) opened here in 1836, which we can have a sneak view of!

Before reaching Kyoto, we will island hop from Takamatsu to a small island Naoshima, most famous for modern architecture and alternative design. The island is becoming increasingly popular with visitors from all over the world, but especially by those with an interest in art.

Kyoto

Your tour will finish up in the ancient capital of Kyoto where we spend three final nights.

Kyoto is Japan's ancient capital and this is reflected in the seventeen sites designation and preserved with UNESCO World Heritage. Your local guide will narrate you through the history and cultural heritage of this magnificent city. You will take part in an authentic tea ceremony, to whet your whistle, in one of Kyoto's traditional machi-ya (teahouses).

We recommend that you arrange your departing flight out of Kansai Airport in Osaka. In any event, we will be happy to assist you in making any alternative arrangements to ensure a hassle free departure.

Departure Dates:

2019: Mar 31, May 26, Jul 07, Sep 07, Nov 17

2020: Feb 10, Mar 29, May 24, Jul 11, Aug 30, Nov 16

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 4,600 £ 4,170 US\$ 5,340 AU\$ 7,550

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 5,500 £ 5,000 US\$ 6,400 AU\$ 9,050

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 7 nights in 3 & 4 star Western Hotels, 1 night in a temple lodge, 4 nights in traditional Ryokans
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 5 evening meals
- **English Speaking tour leader:** English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout your journey
- **Airport Transfers:** Arrival & departure to & from Tokyo & Kyoto hotel
- **Private Tour Guides:** Local English speaking tour guides in Tokyo, Ise, Koyasan, Iya Valley, & Kyoto
- **Entrance Fees:** Included into all sights listed on itinerary
- **Cultural Experiences:** Tokyo sights by day & night, the Great Ise Shrine, Toyota Car Factory Tour & Museum, Mikimoto Pearl Island visit & Ama Divers Demonstration, Overnight stays in luxurious traditional ryokans with Kaiseki dinners included, Koyasan temple stay, calligraphy and/or meditation with monks, ferry ride to Shikoku, Indigo Dying workshop participation, Iya Valley Boat Ride, Japanese Garden visit, Naoshima Art Island museums, Kyoto World Heritage temples & shrines, & an authentic Kyoto Tea Ceremony



Ancient Trails of Japan

"The perfect choice for an adventurer in search of stunning scenery, mystical trails, hot springs and culinary delights"

13 Nights / 14 Days

Japan is blessed with some of the most spectacular National Parks in the world, many of which are hidden miles away from the bright lights of Tokyo and Osaka. Some of the ancient trails within these National Parks have been crossed for centuries. Thousands of pilgrims from all walks of life including retired Emperors and samurai leaders were keen travellers on these trails. Our particular favourites include the Unesco World Heritage 'Sacred Mountains of the Kii Peninsula', Fuji National Park, and the two samurai villages of Tsumago and Magome.

Tokyo

Tokyo is the start and end point to this tour and stands in stark contrast to the spiritual and old-world feel of most of your trip. You will spend a full day with a local guide who will show you the various sights in this behemoth of a city. Visit Tokyo Sky Tree and ride 350 meters up into the sky. Enjoy stunning panoramic views of the city skyline. Venture to the famous Tsukiji Fish Market to whet your appetite for sampling the freshest sushi in the world, over lunch later on!

Kawaguchiko, Mt Fuji (Fuji National Park)

Five large lakes surround Mount Fuji. Kawaguchiko is the most easily accessible of the Fuji Five Lakes from Tokyo. The main draw to this area is the amazing views of Mount Fuji. From your ryokan, you can gaze up at its near symmetrical form, spending the evening in a hot spring bath (onsen) before sitting down to a feast of Kaiseki cuisine (traditional Japanese meal). We will also adventure up to Mt Fuji's fifth station by bus and do some easy sightseeing around the Kawaguchiko area.

For those who join our July tour you have the opportunity to climb this majestic giant (Mt. Fuji) with a local guide. Overnight in a mountain hut (don't expect luxury) and watch the sun rise from 3,880 above sea level.

Kyoto

After a relaxing night at the foot of Mt Fuji, we head west on the bullet train to the ancient capital, Kyoto. This city is one of the most culturally rich cities in Asia. Home to eight 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, sacred shrines, time-honoured teahouses and mysterious geisha. 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.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 13 Nights / 14 Days	Ryokan/Minshuku: 6 Nights
Theme: Hiking, Mountains, Photography	Code: CP219
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Ages: All Ages
Style: Standard	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → Mt Fuji (1) → Kyoto (3) → Kii Peninsula (Kumano Kodo) (3) → Nagoya (1) → Tsumago/Magome (2) → Tokyo (1)



Kumano Kodo, 'Sacred Mountains of the Kii Peninsula'

Located in the magnificent Kii Peninsula, three hours south of Kyoto, is the breathtaking Kumano Kodo region. This is one of Japan's oldest sacred sites and pilgrimage routes of more than one thousand years. Blessed with lush mountains, awe inspiring waterfalls, a rugged coastline, soothing hot springs, and rich traditional culture, Kumano Kodo is sure to take your breath away. Accompanied by our local Kumano guide, using chartered vehicles, river boats and on foot, we will spend four incredible days discovering Japan's spiritual roots and mysterious mountains. This trail will lead us to the Three Grand Shrines; Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kumano Hayatama Taisha, and Kumano Nachi Taisha. On our November tour, you can experience a soak in an outdoor hot spring river onsen at Kawayu Onsen.



Nagoya, Tsumago & Magome

After three traditional nights stay in Kumano Kodo, we make a one night stop in Nagoya, Japan's third largest city. Your tour leader will take you to a local restaurant/bar (*izakaya*) to sample *tebasaki* (marinated chicken wings) and show you some of the cities nightlife hot spots.

After breakfast, you will have the chance to visit a samurai castle in Nagoya. That same afternoon, we take a two-hour train ride north to Nagano prefecture, disembarking in *Tsumago*. This beautifully preserved samurai postal town was once used as the main road between Edo (now Tokyo) and Kyoto. Its neighbouring village *Magome* has also been preserved to its original character. Both villages have a rich history, displaying an untarnished view of a more traditional Japan. On our second day in Tsumago, some (or all) of us will walk the eight-kilometer trail from Tsumago to Magome. For those who prefer the easy option, a bus service connects both villages.

Your tour ends in Tokyo on Day Fourteen. If you have time to extend your trip, we recommend you stay one or two more nights in Tokyo, which can be arranged by our team.

Departure Dates:

2019: Apr 14, Jun 28, Aug 19, Nov 29, Dec 24

2020: Apr 12, Jul 10, Aug 10, Nov 27, Dec 24

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 4,200 £ 3,800 US\$ 4,850 AU\$ 6,850

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 5,150 £ 4,700 US\$ 6,000 AU\$ 8,500

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 7 nights in standard hotels (3*) and 6 nights in traditional ryokans & minshikus
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 1 lunch, 5 evening meals
- **English Speaking tour leader:** English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout your journey
- **Airport Transfers:** Arrival & departure to & from Tokyo hotel
- **Private Tour Guides:** Local English speaking tour guides in Tokyo, Kyoto, & Kumano Kodo
- **Entrance Fees:** Included into all sights listed on itinerary
- **Cultural Experiences:** Tokyo sights by day & night, Kyoto Tea Ceremony, Geisha Meet & Greet, World Heritage Temples and Shrines, bullet train journeys, garden visits, 4 day rural journey through the World Heritage 'Sacred Mountains of the Kii Peninsula', meeting locals, river boat cruise, Samurai Castle visit, Tsumago to Magome light mountain trek (optional), Mt Fuji, ryokan stays, hot spring baths, and much more.

Japan Discovered

"A contrast of traditional and modern Japan, unforgettable experiences and visits to some of Japan's must-see UNESCO World Heritage Sites"

13 Nights / 14 days

Is your dream to see Japan's highlights, some of its culture and off-the-beaten-track locations? Japan Discovered two-week tour is the perfect choice for you. Glittering cities, rural towns & villages, history & heritage, gardens & wildlife, local festivals, cultural experiences, and a taste of real local foods; just some of the best bits on this trip!

Tokyo

Arrive into either Haneda or Narita International Airports on your scheduled flight. Greeted on arrival by our local driver and brought directly to your hotel. That evening, you will meet your group and tour leader before heading out to a local restaurant for a welcome dinner.

Your second day will be spent with our local Tokyo guide who will accompany you to places such as the world-famous Tsukiji Fish Market, Hamarikyu Garden, and the traditional neighbourhood of Asakusa! If traveling on our May or September Japan Discovered dates you can enjoy the seasons Grand Sumo Tournament in the downtown area of Ryugoku, home to Tokyo's Sumo Stadium.

Nagano & Matsumoto

After breakfast, we board the *Azusa*' high-speed express train to Matsumoto to visit one of Japan's finest samurai castles. Climbing steps will be necessary here. After a five-minute climb to the top, you will feel like a Shogun Warrior! Alternatively you could explore the beautiful gardens that surround the castle. Tonight will be your first introduction to a traditional and typical Japanese hotel known as a ryokan in a small village nearby to Yudanaka Onsen (home of the snow monkeys). *Kaiseki* dinner & *Onsen* (hot spring baths) are a real treat tonight!

After breakfast we will visit the snow monkey park. Here you can watch the wild monkeys bath in their natural hot spring bath at the foot of the mountain. From here we take the scenic drive to Takayama. River valleys and majestic mountains are at either side, often difficult to find when traveling along the bullet train tracks!

Takayama & Gokayama

We will spend two nights in the old merchant town of Takayama. Take a step back in time to the Samurai days with our local Takayama guide who will walk & talk you through the history and places of this unforgotten era.

For those who join our April or October tours, you can take part in the annual Spring or Autumn Festivals. The whole town comes together to parade giant hand-crafted colourful floats, street food stalls, and local performances for two full days. Experience of such a rare local celebration is a real highlight to this trip. Takayama is particularly popular for its Hida Beef, a similar type to Kobe Beef.

Between Kanazawa and Takayama lies the remote historic village of Gokayama, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Famous for its rare and rustic four hundred year old *gassho zukkuri* farmhouses, you will learn how to make





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 13 Nights / 14 Days	Ryokan / Minshuku: 3 Nights
Theme: Cultural, Gardens, Museums, Festivals, Family	Code: CP220
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Ages: All Ages
Style: Standard/Superior	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → Nagano, *Yudanaka* Onsen (1) → Takayama (2) (via Matsumoto) → Kanazawa (1) via Gokayama → Kyoto (3) → Hiroshima & Miyajima Island (1) → Mt. Fuji/Hakone (1) → Tokyo (2)



soba (buckwheat) noodles, washi paper, and meet the local farmers. They will perform their traditional Toyama dance for you over a cup of hot roasted tea sitting around the original fire burner.

Kanazawa & Kyoto

Tonight's rest will be in Kanazawa, also known as 'Little Kyoto'. The following morning, we take a stroll along Higashi Chaya, the former geisha and samurai district before entering one of Japan's top three gardens, Kenrokuen.

Three nights are spent in the heart of Japan's cultural and ancient capital Kyoto. Explore the breathtaking temples, gardens, shrines and back streets with our local guide. Participate in an authentic tea ceremony in a local *machi-ya* (teahouse). Meet and chat to our local Kyoto *maiko* (young geisha).

You will have the chance to explore the city on a free day. Your tour leader will assist you plan your route!

Hiroshima & Miyajima Island

Our journey continues west on the *shinkansen* (bullet) train to our next stop, Hiroshima! Japan's bullet train offers first class comforts like no other. Our local Hiroshima guide will greet us upon arrival. Be prepared to listen to the over whelming story of how this humble city has rebuilt itself after the devastating Atomic bomb of 1948. You can be assured of an emotional mood while entering the Peace Park and the A-Bomb Dome.

On a much lighter note, we move by local train and ferry to Miyajima Island, another UNESCO World Heritage hot spot! Welcomed by the wild deer of Miyajima, tonight's stay will be another treat at a traditional ryokan.

Mt. Fuji/Hakone

On day twelve of your trip, you will start making your way back to the capital Tokyo using the high-speed bullet trains. You will make one final stop in a town called Hakone, a beautiful national park area around 50 miles west of Tokyo and just to the south of Mt Fuji, Japan's most sacred peak. This area is most famous for getting the best views of Japan's most sacred and iconic mountain Mt Fuji. However, be sure to have your camera at the ready. Fuji is notoriously shy and you do not want to miss that precious photo opportunity! Overnight in a traditional ryokan with onsen and dinner.

The next day you will arrive back to Tokyo. Enjoy the whole day to finish some last minute shopping or sightseeing. Your tour sadly comes to an end on day fourteen after breakfast.

Departure Dates:

2019: Mar 17, Apr 11, May 12, Sep 01, Oct 06, Nov 24

2020: Mar 25, Apr 10, May 10, Sep 06, Oct 05, Nov 25

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 4,500 £ 4,100 US\$ 5,250 AU\$ 7,400

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 5,500 £ 4,950 US\$ 6,400 AU\$ 9,000

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 10 nights in 3 & 4 star Western Hotels, 3 nights in traditional Ryokans
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 1 lunch, 3 evening meals
- **English Speaking tour leader:** English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout your journey
- **Airport Transfers:** Arrival & departure airport transfers included to & from Tokyo hotel and all necessary transport required for itinerary
- **Private Tour Guides:** Local English speaking tour guides in Tokyo, Takayama, Gokayama, Kyoto, 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).

Traditional & Tropical Japan

"Sub-tropical Pacific Island, Amami Ooshima, is one of Japan's best kept secrets. This is the perfect way to finish an exhilarating journey through Honshu Japan."

13 Nights / 14 days

Traditional & Tropical is one of our all-time favourites. Travel through Japan's mainland island Honshu. Your tour will allow you to see Japan's most famous towns and cities, capturing breath-taking moments.

Tokyo & Nagano

Like all of our tours, we meet in Tokyo. Two fun-filled days touring and taking it all in. Our local Tokyo guide will try to fill in the gaps for you and answer all the questions you are bound to have.

On Day 3, we leave the city and venture north to Nagano. Depending on the season, we may or may not get to see the red-faced monkeys playing and bathing in their hot springs. During the mating season (Sep-Nov), they tend to stay up in the mountain. Much better things to do in than entertain tourists!

If we don't see the snow monkeys, your tour leader will make an alternative plan such as going straight to Matsumoto for more time at the Castle or freestyle. Or, visit the 7th Century Zenkoji Temple in Nagano city, one of Japan's most important and impressive temples.

Matsumoto Castle & Traditional Takayama

Matsumoto Castle is one of our favourite original Samurai Castles in Japan. It has been preserved (internally) in its original form, unlike some other large castles in Japan (Osaka & Nagoya). Climb to the top and see how the Feudal Lords lived. If time allows, we may stop at the Ukiyo-e Museum which holds the largest private collection of woodblock prints, paintings, screens, and old books in the world. The scenic drive from Matsumoto to Takayama takes approx. two hours.

Takayama is nestled in the Hida Mountain Range. Famous for Hida beef (tastes just as good as Kobe beef), sake (rice wine) making, and old merchant streets still very active selling their goods and foods. Two nights here will be enough to give you a sense of how the Japanese people enjoy the vibrant morning market,

lively streets by day, yet somewhat sleepy streets at night. If you are on our April or October tours, watch out! The Spring/Autumn Festival light up the streets at night with giant wooden carved floats parading like royalty. Street food vendors gather, music lovers play, dancers do their thing. Certainly a highlight of the trip.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 14 Nights / 15 Days	Ryokan/Beach: 4 nights
Theme: Traditional Arts, Gardens, R&R, Family	Code: CP205
Style: Standard/Superior	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → Matsumoto & Takayama (3)
→ Kanazawa (1) → Kyoto (3) → Amami Ooshima (3)
→ Tokyo (2)



Kanazawa, Gokayama & Kyoto

Today, en-route to Kanazawa, we visit the farm villages with the perfect thatched roofs. Gokayama was recently awarded Unesco World Heritage status. Your first task for today is to make your own sheets of rice paper at the local washi paper-making store. As if you haven't done enough, you then have to prepare your own soba noodles for lunch! All adding to the fun and a great distraction from temples and shrines, often overpowering on other tours. Stopping in Kanazawa for one night with the visit to Kenrokuen Garden the main attraction here. Kyoto will be for 3 nights with an endless list of things to do here including our guided tour on one day, your meeting with Geisha, and tea ceremony.

Tropical Amami Ooshima

With a full itinerary of activities and sightseeing done, you deserve nothing more than 3 nights on the sub tropical island of Amami Ooshima. Amami is located between the mainland Kagoshima and Okinawa. Less crowded, perfectly pure, stunning scenery, beautiful beaches, calm coastal drives, wondering wildlife, all await you on this island. Our local driver will meet you on the second day you arrive and bring you on a private tour of the island. Your hotel is located on the beach with views to die for. Scuba diving, snorkelling, and all types of watersports are available upon request.



Departure Dates:

2019: May 12, Oct 06

2020: April 10, May 10, Sep 06, Oct 05

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 5,445 £ 4,950 US\$ 6,350 AU\$ 8,950

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 6,500 £ 6,050 US\$ 7,750 AU\$ 10,900

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 10 nights standard & superior combined western hotels, 1 night in superior ryokan, 3 nights on beach front hotel
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 1 Lunch, 5 Evening Meals
- **Local Assistants:** when tour is less than 6 persons
- **English/Japanese speaking tour leader** throughout if tour is more than 6 persons
- **Transfers:** Arrival & departure airport transfers, Japan Rail Pass, Ferry Tickets, Chartered Vehicles, Bullet Trains, Domestic Flight to tropical islands
- **Entrance Fees:** All sights listed on itinerary including Sumo Tournament Tickets for May & September dates, Takayama Festival April & October dates
- **Cultural Experiences:** Tokyo & Kyoto Highlights, Rural onsen retreat with kaiseki dinner & hot springs, snow monkeys of Nagano, live Sumo tournament (May/Sep), Gokayama world heritage visit, Soba noodle making, Washi paper making, Tropical Amami Ooshima, Mangrove Lake Canoe, Glass bottom boat ride, Kimono factory, cookery class in Kyoto, ramen tasting tour Tokyo, Takayama Spring and Autumn festivals (Apr/Oct).

Gardens & Galleries

"A deluxe tour steeped in horticultural richness, spiritual zen and culture preserved at various UNESCO World Heritage Sites & Museums, with visits to award winning art galleries"

11 Nights / 12 Days

Gardens & Galleries of Japan is a once in a lifetime tour taking you to the finest Japanese Gardens and Award Winning Art Galleries. You will experience not only the incredible beauty of these gardens but also the stunning natural landscapes that inform their design. Met by award-winning Japanese garden experts along the way, who will explain the concepts and execution of the various styles of Japanese gardens.

You will visit gardens in Tokyo, Kamakura, Kanazawa, Kyoto, and Shimane that best exemplify the three main types of Japanese gardens: tea gardens, sand & stone gardens, and promenade gardens. These include Kenrokuen, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan, and the Adachi Art Museum Garden which has been crowned the best Japanese landscape garden for twelve years running by the Journal of Japanese Gardens.

Tokyo & Kamakura

Get ready to open your eyes to the worlds busiest yet organised cities in the world, Tokyo! Hamariyku Garden, nestled in the heart of the skyscraper skyline, will be your first garden visit. A walk through this magnificent metropolitan garden can only be described as enchanting. Nearby you will step upon the hustle and bustle of the worlds largest fish market, Tsukiji, an experience you won't forget either! Next you will visit Asakusa Temple, Tokyo's oldest and most important temple. From Asakusa we take a trip to see Tokyo's National Museum in Ueno. Established in 1872, TNM is the oldest Japanese national museum, the largest art museum in Japan and one of the largest art museums in the world. Enjoy some free time in Ueno to browse the lively Ameyoko market.

For our May departure, your tour leader will suggest an optional day trip to Ashikaga Flower Park to see the Great Wisteria Tree of more than 150 years of age.

Kamakura is a charming coastal town, once the capital of Japan between 1185 and 1333, a turbulent and bloody time in its history. Today Kamakura is a haven of tranquillity and is home to many secluded temples and shrines. These are hidden gems located away from the main tourist trail. Engakuji is one of the leading Zen temples in Japan, built into the slopes of forested hills surrounded by maple trees, a truly stunning setting. Enjoy the serenity of this charming and holistic location.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 11 Nights / 12 Days	Ryokan: 2 Nights
Theme: Gardens, Museums, Photography	Code: CP221
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Ages: All Ages
Style: Superior/Deluxe	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo & Kamakura (3) → Kanazawa (1)
→ Kyoto (Hiroshima & Miyajima, Nara) (3) →
Matsue (2) ✈️ → Tokyo (2)



Kenrokuen Garden (Kanazawa)

Kanazawa, just a 3 hour bullet train ride from Tokyo, is home to one of The Three Great Gardens of Japan, Kenrokuen. The name Kenroku-en means "garden combining six characteristics" and is rooted in the idea that it serves the six aspects considered most important in creating the ideal garden. These aspects are: spaciousness, serenity, venerability, scenic views, subtle design, and coolness. Kenrokuen is designed as a walking garden with roughly 8,750 trees and 183 species of plants in total. A visit to Kenrokuen is every garden enthusiast's dream. Next to Kenrokuen is one of Japan's trendiest modern art museums, The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art.

Moss Garden & Bamboo Forest Grove (Kyoto)

Oozing with tradition, Kyoto is the ultimate destination for anybody who wants to soak up time-honoured Japanese culture. Home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, this ancient city showcases the heart and soul of traditional Japan. Saihō-ji is a Zen Buddhist temple famed for its moss garden. Acclaimed by many as Kyoto's most beautiful garden, it is a registered UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the "Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto".

Your local Kyoto guide will take you through both Saiho-ji explaining the significance of the garden's features and how it exemplifies the zen-style of Japanese gardens. You will also visit Arashiyama, famous for the thousands of bamboo trees lined up a light pathway next to the river.

Adachi Museum of Art Japanese Gardens (Matsue)

Matsue, located in rural Shimane, is Japan's best kept secret, known as the birthplace of Japan and the home of the gods. You will visit the stunning number one ranked Adachi Museum of Art Japanese Gardens in Yasugi. Here at Adachi you will have the chance to experience traditional tea ceremony in the magical environs of the Juryu-an Garden Tea House. There are only twelve original castle structures remaining in Japan and Matsue Castle is one of the finest examples of these Edo Period feudal strongholds having survived for over 400 years. In the evening you will enjoy two nights stay in a luxurious ryokan with sumptuous kaiseki dinner & soothing onsen (hot springs), a true highlight to end your tour. On your way back to Tokyo you will stop off at Japan's oldest shrine, also a Unesco World Heritage, Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine. Take your time to enjoy this special experience before you bid farewell to Shimane and return to Tokyo by airplane.

Departure Dates:

2019: Mar 31, May 12, Sep 24, Nov 12

2020: Mar 27, May 10, Sep 23, Nov 12

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 4,600 £ 4,200 US\$ 5,400 AU\$ 7,500

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 6,150 £ 5,600 US\$ 7,200 AU\$ 10,150

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 9 nights in 4 & 5 star Western Hotels, 2 nights in traditional Ryokans
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 3 evening meals
- **English Speaking tour leader:** English/Japanese speaking assistants at each point (when less than 6)
English/Japanese speaking tour leader throughout (when 6 or more)
- **Transfers:** Arrival & departure to & from Tokyo hotel and all necessary transport required for itinerary
- **Private Tour Guides:** English speaking / garden specific tour guides in Tokyo, Kamakura, Kanazawa, Kyoto, and Matsue
- **Entrance fees:** Included into all sights listed on itinerary
- **Cultural Experiences:** Tokyo City Sightseeing incl. Hamarikyu Garden, Tokyo National Museum, Kamamura hidden trails & Giant Buddha statue, Kenrokuen Garden Kanazawa, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyoto's world heritage sites, bamboo forest & Moss Garden, bullet train journeys, dining out with locals, luxurious accommodation, Samurai castle and Authentic tea ceremony in Matsue, Adachi Museum of Art, Izumo Taisha Shrine, Ikebana flower arranging workshop.

Journey to the East

"A week long discovery to the truly unknown and hidden parts of Eastern Hokkaido, featuring Sapporo Snow Festival, Red Crowned Crane Sanctuary, & Shiretoko World Heritage Peninsula."

7 Nights / 8 days

Hokkaido's unspoilt natural beauty makes it a haven for outdoor lovers and nature enthusiasts. Among its vast national parks and lakes you will come across an abundance of wildlife. Its most famous includes the symbolic red crowned crane, wild bear, red fox, and giant eagles. Enjoy some coastal explorations in search for dolphins, whales and sea lions. Visit lakes set in volcano calderas. Learn about the indigenous Ainu people. Relax in open-air hot spring baths. Savour on Japan's freshest and tastiest seafood and culinary treats. These are just some of the encounters you can expect on this incredible journey through Eastern Hokkaido.

Sapporo Snow Festival

Journey to the East begins in Sapporo's Airport. You will be met on arrival for flights arriving after 10am. Transfer included to your Sapporo hotel. Experience one of the largest snow festivals in the world where giant snow sculptures, visited by some two million people every year, line the streets of Sapporo day and night, waiting to wow you with their enormous impact and street festival feeling!

On your second day in Sapporo, you can enjoy free time. Use this time to take a day trip out to Otaru, a unique city famous for its glass industry and artisan trades people. It is also known for serving some of the freshest seafood in the whole of Japan. Don't be afraid to try the giant King Crab caught fresh from local shores.

Kushiro & Red Crowned Cranes

After two nights in Sapporo, we take an express train for three hours east to Kushiro. Kushiro is well known as "the town of mist," facing the Pacific Ocean. The marine products industry of Kushiro has flourished since the early 20th century. The long and narrow city centred on Kushiro Port still retains many features of this century. Kushiro Tancho Nature Park is known as the site of the first successful artificial breeding of Tancho cranes (Red crowned cranes), which are designated as special natural monuments.

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. It was only sixty years ago that their numbers dwindled to such low levels that they faced the threat of extinction. Their protection and repopulation is a great success story of 21st century conservation in Japan.

The Setsuri-gawa River and Tsurui Ito Tancho Sanctuary are the best places to view these birds. 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.

Travel Tip: Temperatures will be as low as minus 20 degrees celsius on this morning. A suitable down jacket with thermal under garments, hat, gloves etc. are essential. Other days will not be as cold but particular care is needed on the early morning visit to the Tancho Sanctuary.





Start: Sapporo - Finish Abashiri

Duration: 7 Nights / 8 Days	Ryokan: 3 nights
Theme: Photography, Wildlife, Nature, Culture	Code: CP223
Group Size: Min 6, Max 16	Ages: All Ages
Style: Standard/Superior	Tour Level: ●●●●●

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



Lake Akan & Abashiri

Lake Akan is a beautiful crater lake in Akan National Park. It is home to marimo, a rare algae species that forms itself into beautiful green balls. Left alone for a few centuries, Lake Akan's marimo can reach the size of soccer balls. The algae have been designated a National Special Natural Monument. We will stay overnight in a ryokan at Lake Akan, visiting the Ainu Village. Meet the local Ainu people, enjoying their evening performance in the local hall.

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.

Shiretoko Peninsula

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. The sightseeing boat is 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.

Winter Sports Extension

Our tour ends in Abashiri. Nearest domestic airport is Memambetsu Airport. From here you can fly to Tokyo. We can arrange for you. Alternatively, the train to Sapporo will take approx. 5 hours and cost 10,000JPY. We will ensure you have the best exit plan so discuss with us first.

Departure Dates:

2019: Feb 4 - 11

2020: Feb 3 - 10

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 2,800 £ 2,550 US\$ 3,272 AU\$ 6,150

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 3,585 £ 3,250 US\$ 4,175 AU\$ 7,550

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 4 nights in 3 & 4* hotels, 3 nights in superior Japanese Ryokans with hot springs
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 3 Ryokan Dinners
- **Tour leader:** Local English/Japanese speaking tour leader throughout
- **Transfers:** Chartered Vehicle, Express Train Sapporo to Kushiro, Airport Transfers (Sapporo In / Memambetsu out)
- **Entrance fees:** Included into all sights listed in itinerary
- **Cultural Activities / Experiences:** Sapporo Snow Festival & sightseeing, red crowned crane sanctuary and viewing spot, Marimo boat ride at Lake Akan, overnight stays in traditional ryokans, open-air hot spring baths, Ainu culture Show, drift ice boat cruise (subject to weather), Abashiri prison, sightseeing, amazing scenic drives.



Fuji Rock & Climb

"A record breaking Summer adventure in Japan – can you do it?"

11 Nights / 12 Days

Encounter one challenge after another; Climb the highest mountain in Japan (3,780m), Attend the biggest music festival in Japan (Fuji Rock), Visit the home of the best known Taiko Drumming band on the planet ('Kodo', Sado Island).

Mt Fuji & Five Lakes

After a thorough introduction to Tokyo's bright lights and tiny side streets, strap up your climbing boots to catch an unforgettable sunrise (and a bowl of life-restoring noodles) from Mt Fuji's peak with an experienced climb leader—or just relax at the lakeside and enjoy the view if you don't fancy the climb! Then take a closer look at some of that beautiful scenery with a visit to a local organic farm cafe. For both climbers & non-climbers why not discover the art of relaxation – Japanese style! You will want nothing more than to soak your weary bones in the hot natural waters in one of Fuji's Five Lakes magnificent onsen.

Fuji Rock Festival – 3 Days of unstoppable fun!

After two days by the lake, it's time to change into your dancing shoes for an epic three day Fuji Rock Festival! (We'll be staying at a local hotel or country inn, so festival wellies won't be required!). With a combination of international star acts, Japanese favourites of all genres, and a mix of ubiquitous (think all-night rave) and Japan-specific (hot spring bath, anyone?) features, this is truly a festival like no other. Three days might not be enough to see it all.

Sado Island

Escape the festival aftermath and take a ferry trip to the 'Island of Exile', Sadogashima on Japan's west coast. Don't be surprised if you see fellow Fuji Rockers on the same ferry – all with the same idea in mind!! Sado is home to Japan's famous Kodo taiko drumming group. So let the beats go on with a drumming workshop at the island's Taiko Centre. Take a spin in a traditional tarai-bune barrel boat (just like that one in Spirited Away)! While in keeping with our 'rocks' theme, visit the abandoned gold mine and eerie film-set lit up at night.

After a week of intense social and muscle burning activities, you'll find your break on Sado Island pure paradise! After two nights on the island, it's back to the neon glow of Tokyo to end your tour. Get in some last minute shopping or arrange to meet your new Fuji Rock friends for one last night out in the capital.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 11 Nights / 12 Days Ryokan / Minshiku : 7 nights
 Theme: Festivals, Traditional Arts, Hiking, Youthful, Music. Code: CP263
 Group Size: Min 6, Max 16 Ages: 20's - 40's
 Style: Standard Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → Mt Fuji (2)
 → Niigata (Fuji Rock) (3) → Sado Island (2)
 → Tokyo (2)



Departure Dates:

2019: July 21 – Aug 01

2020: July 20 – 31

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 3,500 £ 3,200 US\$ 4,100 AU\$ 5,800

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 4,500 £ 4,170 US\$ 5,350 AU\$ 7,540

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 4 nights standard western hotels, 7 nights Japanese-style
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 3 Evening Meals
- **English speaking assistant/s:** throughout your journey
- **Transfers:** Arrival & departure airport transfers, Japan Rail Pass, Ferry Tickets, Chartered Vehicles, Bullet Trains
- **Private Tour Guides:** English-speaking local tour guides in Tokyo, Sado and Kyoto
- **Entrance fees:** 3 Day Fuji Rock Tickets & all sights listed on itinerary
- **Cultural Activities / Experiences:** Tokyo Highlights, Wadaiko Japanese drumming workshop, Intangible National Property Tara-Bune boat ride, overnight stays in traditional ryokan, climbing Mt. Fuji, Fuji Rock Festival, hanging out with fellow Japanese music lovers.



Young & Fun Japan

"A vibrant whirlwind mix of old & new, classic & cutting edge, city streets & country villages with flexibility & freedom allowed, for the 20-30 somethings around us."

9 Nights / 10 Days

Are you a manga-maniac or a fan of Kurosawa flicks? Aren't you curious about 'Maid Café's? Or what about a 'Cat Café'? 'Purikura' prints with your friends. Scoot around Tokyo in a Go-Cart wearing a super Mario costume. Climb (crawl) to the top of Mt Fuji (Summer months only). Walk the old Samurai trail between Magome and Tsumago, ensuring you don't miss out on some heritage. The list is endless. With so much choice for the young, to have honest simple fun!

Tokyo & Mt Fuji

Tokyo has everything you can imagine, yet more. Start your trip off with an all-you-can-eat & drink Japanese dining experience at a local izakaya. Karaoke after (optional) - always a great ice breaker with groups. The next day enjoy a tour with our local guide visiting some of Tokyo's must see places. On your free day, we suggest you explore the cool areas of Harajuku, Yoyogi Park, Shimokitazawa etc. After your adventure in Tokyo we will venture to the iconic Mt Fuji area, another world entirely. This beautiful countryside resort offers ferry rides, cable cars, outdoor hot springs, and fresh mountain air. If joining our Summer tour, you will have the choice to climb to the summit. Otherwise, just chill at your ryokan.

Osaka & Kyoto

Osaka is a town that knows how to have fun. From your base in the city you'll have access to some of the country's favourite street food and nightlife and shopping, with Kyoto's postcard good looks right on your doorstep. Your time in these two cities can include anything from bamboo forests and river swims to an aquarium that covers four stories.

Your time in these two cities can include anything from bamboo forests and river swims to an aquarium that covers four stories. And of course we'll make sure you get in some good temples as well as an authentic Kyoto tea ceremony.

Nakasendo Old Post Road

This rural trail that once linked Tokyo to Kyoto back in the Samurai days will give you a taste of Japan's feudal past. While here you will stay in a local minshuku, totally traditional in style. An 8km mountain road connects the two quaint villages, a nice change from the city streets. Don't forget to ring the 'bear bells' when you see them!





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 9 Nights / 10 Days	Ryokan/Minshiku : 2 nights
Theme: Cultural, Hiking, Adventurous	Code: CP262
Group Size: Min 1, Max 16	Ages: 18-30
Style: Standard	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → Mt Fuji (1)
 → (Kyoto/Osaka) (3) → Tsumago/Magome (1)
 → Tokyo (2)



Departure Dates:

2019: Jun 30, Jul 27, Aug 20, Dec 15

2020: Jan 16, Feb 19, Mar 19, Jun 30, Jul 11, Oct 24, Dec 27

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 1,995 £ 1,800 US\$ 2,325 AU\$ 3,280

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 2,550 £ 2,300 US\$ 2,950 AU\$ 4,180

(Solo travellers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveller. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 7 nights in clean city centre hotels + 2 nights in Japanese-style minshikus
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 3 evening meals
- **English speaking assistant/s:** throughout your journey
- **Transfers:** Arrival & departure airport transfers included to & from Tokyo hotels, 7 Day Japan Rail Pass, Tokyo Suica Card, Hakone Free Pass
- **Private Tour Guides:** English-speaking local tour guides in Tokyo, Hakone & Kyoto
- **Entrance fees:** Included (itinerary set)
- **Cultural Activities / Experiences:** Izakaya dining out and Karaoke, Visits to World Heritage temples and shrines; journeys by shinkansen, Tea ceremony in traditional Kyoto tea house; overnight stays in traditional minshiku, Edo-era postal mountain hike, Mt Fuji (optional climb in Summer months), and back street tours with your guide.

The Northern Trail featuring Sado Island

*"A refreshing Summer tour packed with adventure, outdoor freedom, festival fun, and local interaction.
Suitable for both the first time visitor or seasoned guest to Japan in search of a real off-the-beaten-track experience."*

11 Nights / 12 Days

Sado Island [Earth Celebration]

Escape the city heat to Sado Island for a mind blowing energetic 3-Day Taiko drumming festival. The festival is held annually by the International renowned Kodo Group (1981 ~). Quoted by The New York Times "if there is such a thing as perfection in music, Kodo comes as near to it as any group in the world."

Sado Island is surrounded by 280km of coastline making it the perfect paradise for chilling by the beach & relaxation. Earth Celebration is like no other festival; traditional arts & crafts, live performances by some of Japan's best kept secrets, incredible nature, meeting & dancing with locals, workshops and more. Kodo performances are undoubtedly the highlight. Book your Kodo workshop early to avoid disappointment.

Adventure on the Alps

After three heart beating days on the island of Sado, we take a ferry and train to the city of Toyama. Toyama is one of the seven city bases of the Japan Alps ("Chubu Sangaku National Park"). After a brief stop in Toyama we start our adventure on the Alps from Tateyama. The Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route is closed during the Winter. So our Summer northern trail is the perfect time to explore this area.

The route we take will be from Tateyama to Ogizawa. Plenty of walking involved but we should get across the pass in about 6 hours. Don't worry, you won't be walking for 6 hours! Cheating allowed on cable cars & mountain trolley buses. Take a moment at the gushing Kurobe Dam (world's highest 186m). Listen to the powerful waterfalls along the way.

All possible with a one day ticket (included)! No matter what, you can be assured of capturing the best panoramic pictures for that all important travel journal! After a full day of activity, we finish up in Matsumoto. Another of the seven cities on the Alps, Matsumoto is a quaint valley town most famous for its glorious original samurai castle.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Kyoto/Osaka

Duration: 11 Nights / 12 Days	Ryokan/Minshuku : 3 nights
Theme: Walking	Code: CP264
Group Size:	Ages: All Ages
Style: Standard	Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (3) → Sado Island (3)
 → Tateyama (Kurobe Alpine Route) (1)
 → Matsumoto (1) → Kyoto / Osaka (3)



Back Streets & World Heritage Kyoto

Our adventures continue in Kyoto, the culture capital of Japan. It won't matter how many times you've been to Japan. There's something for everyone in Kyoto. Apart from our guided tour on one day, you'll have free time to explore and tick those bucket list places to see! Like all our tours, we will have tea in a traditional tea house and hopefully get to see the scurrying geisha along the way too.

Your best way out of Japan will be from Kansai Airport. However, if your flight leaves from Tokyo, we can make the necessary arrangements.

Departure Dates:

2019: August 12 - 24

2020: Mid-August (check website)

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 3,800 £ 3,460 US\$ 3,460 AU\$ 6,270

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 4,350 £ 3,950 US\$ 5,060 AU\$ 7,150

(Solo travelers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveler. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- Accommodation: 6 or 7 nights standard western, 3/4 nights Japanese-style
- Meals: Breakfast daily, 3 evening meals
- English speaking assistant/s: throughout your journey
- Transfers: Airport transfers, 7 Day Japan Rail Pass, Tokyo Suica Card, Return Ferry Tickets Sado Island, Kurobe Alpine Route One/Way Pass
- Private Tour Guides: English-speaking local tour guides in Tokyo & Kyoto
- Entrance fees: Included into all sights listed on itinerary including 3 Day Earth Celebration
- Cultural Activities / Experiences: Tokyo city sights day & night | Sado Island 3 Day Earth Celebration Festival, Taiko Drumming (or other music) Workshops (book separately), Japanese Alps Trekking, Matsumoto Castle & Wood Block Museum, Kyoto World Heritage temples, Authentic Tea Ceremony Kyoto, Optional Day trip to Hiroshima & Miyajima Island (using your rail pass/self-guided).



Taste Japan

"Did you know that Tokyo has more Michelin star awarded restaurants than any other city in the world?"

9 Nights / 10 Days

Join us on a luxurious journey of cultural experiences, Michelin star restaurants, world heritage visits, deluxe hotel and luxury ryokan stays. This five star culinary and cultural tour "Taste Japan" is perfect for those who appreciate outstanding food, wine and beautiful surroundings. Japan has quite the reputation for culture and cuisine. No matter how often you've frequented a 'foreign' Japanese restaurant in your own country or on your travels, none will compare to what you are about to experience.

Explosion of the Senses

We begin in Tokyo. An historically charged, culturally rich guided tour of the city with lunch at your first Michelin star eatery. Each of our tours may differ in where we dine as some of these top end places are difficult to make reservations due to their small size. You will savour as many different types of dishes while on your travels; from ramen to kaiseki, and shabu-shabu to okonomiyaki.

Don't worry, it won't all be mitchelin based. You will experience the local products just as much. So get your chopsticks skills ready as you may even have to cook for yourself!

Experiences while touring

Our local Tokyo guide will show us the sights in Tokyo. Enjoy a lesson in sushi-making by one of Tokyo's top sushi chefs. Follow our Tokyo ramen-masters who will bring you on a ramen-tasting tour of the city. After a brief 2.5 hour ride in the first class shinkansen bullet train to Kyoto, we will meet our friendly Kyoto guide who will introduce the city to us, paying a special visit to the Imperial Palace (subject to reservation). Learn how to prepare tea, Japanese style, by one of Kyoto's finest tea masters. Dine with a beautiful white-faced and kimono clad Kyoto Geisha. Visit our Kyoto housewife for a Japanese home cooking demonstration. Your tour leader will give you the option to visit Koyasan (Mt Koya) where Shojin Ryori (vegetarian/temple cuisine) is on the menu. Finally, before finishing up in Tokyo, we will enjoy a one night stay in the calming Kai Enshu.

Hoshinoya Ryokans

Hoshinoya, a Japanese oasis nestled inside the towering sky scrapers of Tokyo's financial district Otemachi, is a five star experience like no other. From the moment you enter this haven of tranquility, a certain zen energy fills the room. Suddenly, you're in the moment! How they do it, we've yet to figure out!

Kai Enshu, is tucked away in the countryside not too far from Mt Fuji. Here we will experience Hoshinoya in a rural setting. A luxury ryokan with relaxing onsen and exquisite cuisine for both breakfast & dinner. You will also have the option of joining a tea-tasting session in the morning before we start our day.





Start: Tokyo - Finish Tokyo

Duration: 9 Nights / 10 Days Ryokan: 1 night

Theme: Food & Wine, Culture, Traditional Arts Code: CP265

Style: Deluxe Tour Level: ●●●●●

ROUTE: Tokyo (2) → (Kyoto) (3)
→ Shizuoka/Mt. Fuji (1) → Tokyo (2)



Departure Dates:

2019: Sep 09, Nov 04, Dec 28

2020: Apr 12, June 07, Sep 27, Dec 27

Price:

Double/Twin (per person):

€ 6,950 £ 6,300 US\$ 8,100 AU\$ 11,400

Single Occupancy (Guaranteed own room):

€ 8,950 £ 8,150 US\$ 10,400 AU\$ 14,700

(Solo travelers have the option to share a twin room with fellow traveler. See 'Useful Information' for more details)

What's included?

- **Accommodation:** 8 Nights Deluxe Western, 1 Night Luxurious Ryokan
- **Meals:** Breakfast daily, 2 Lunches, 5 Evening Meals (3 of your meals will be in Michelin star) with all others 5 star standards
- **English speaking assistant/s:** throughout your journey
- **Transfers:** Private Airport Transfers, First Class Travel on Shinkansen Trains, Privately hired vehicles on all excursions
- **Private Tour Guides:** English-speaking local tour guides in Tokyo & Kyoto
- **Entrance fees:** Included into all sights listed on itinerary
- **Cultural Activities / Experiences:** Tokyo city sights day & night, Sushi-Making Class, Ramen Tasting Tour, Sake (rice wine) Tasting with all meals, Tokyo Traditional Performance, Kyoto Home Cooking Demonstration, Kyoto World Heritage Sites, Authentic Tea Ceremony Kyoto, Meet with Geisha, Visit to Vineyard, Onsen & Kaiseki Japanese Experience



Useful SMALL GROUP TOUR Information

Prices, Booking and Payment

Tour Prices:

Prices printed in this brochure are subject to change, depending on market exchange rate fluctuations. Date of publication of this brochure was January 2018. All tour prices will be kept up-to-date on our website: www.uniquejapantours.com. Alternatively, call us +353 1 6787008 to speak to one of our team directly.

When to book:

Our Small Group Tours have a maximum number of 16 per group so to avoid disappointment we recommend you book your place as early as possible (recommended 3 – 6 months before tour date). Self-Guided Tours should also be booked at an early stage to ensure we can confirm the best hotels for you. Note: Hotels in popular destinations (Kyoto & Tokyo) tend to fill up quickly, particularly during busy and/or festival seasons.

How to book:

All of our small group tours can be booked either online, in person at our Dublin or London city centre offices, over the phone on one of our international landline numbers. We have a dedicated sales team available for most time zones including the USA, CANADA, UK, EUROPE, & MIDDLE EAST. If you are contacting us from Australia or New Zealand, we will do our best to arrange a suitable time to get in touch with you.

Financial Protection:

Total Payment Protection (TOPP) Policy cover provides protection for your booking as set out in Clause 2.7 of our booking Terms & Conditions: <https://www.uniquejapantours.com/terms-conditions/>. In the unlikely event of financial failure please contact the claims helpline on +44(0)1702 811397. A copy of the policy is available on request.

To secure your place on any of our small group tours, we require a non-refundable booking deposit of 250 Euro (or equivalent in your own currency). We accept bank transfers into Euro, Pound Sterling, US Dollars, and Australian Dollar accounts. Or you can pay for any tour through our secure online payment gateway found on our website. We accept all major credit cards. No credit card fees apply.

Payment Deadlines:

Payment for all tours is required 2 months prior to your starting date. In the event a booking is made less than 2 months prior to the Departure Date, full payment must be made within 7 days of receipt of your Confirmed Plan. After payment has been made in full, a cancellation policy is put in place (highlighted on the terms and conditions before you pay your deposit so you are fully aware of the consequences for cancelling).

Travel Documents:

Upon booking, you will be sent a confirmed plan listing your tour inclusions, dates, and acceptance. Your final itinerary and Essential Travel Pack will be sent to your postal address (or you are welcome to come into our office to pick up and discuss) two to three weeks before your travel date. If you require this sooner, please notify us in advance.

We require at least one week's notice to produce all Travel Packs. Some tickets may be handed to you or left at your arrival hotel on Day 1 in Japan. In this case, we will inform you in writing of what you should expect to receive.

Our Packages

Price Inclusions:

No matter which tour you choose, all inclusions will be highlighted to you before making any payment. Tours listed in this brochure have clearly marked inclusions.

For tours not listed in this brochure, you will be sent the full details in writing before making payment.

Our tours include:

- Airport transfers on first and last day
- Airport meet & greet assistance (optional)
- Hotels as listed in your Confirmed Plan
- Meals, transfers, tours, guides as written in itinerary
- Unique Japan Tours Essential Travel Pack

Our tours do not include:

- International Flights
- Tour Leader, Guide & Driver Tips
- Transport not included in itinerary (e.g. taxi's, subways, local buses)
- Entrance fees not stated in itinerary
- Meals not clearly stated
- Drinks of any description
- Hotel charges (telephone, mini bar etc.)

Small Group Tours Single Supplements

For solo travellers, most small group tours will incur a single room supplement. However, if we are able to match you up with another passenger, of the same gender, we will inform you at time of booking.

In this case, you will not be asked to pay the single room rate. We recommend you budget for the Single Room Guaranteed price on our tours if traveling alone. If we can source a travel partner for you, we will contact you directly.

Small Group Tour Hotel Lists

The hotels we use on our small group tours will be announced before you submit your final payment. Any hotel listed on website or literature is subject to change. In the event we cannot secure the hotels listed, we will provide a similar category hotel in each location.

Flights

You are welcome to book your own flight or if you like, we would be happy to send you some quotations which we receive from our partnering agent. As soon as your flight is confirmed, you must inform your booking agent of both arrival and departure times, flight numbers, and airline to ensure the itinerary is accurate from the start and no mistakes are made with arrival dates/times.

Minimum Numbers

All of our Small Group Tours engage a minimum number of 6. In the unlikely event that this minimum number is not achieved, we may be forced to cancel the tour. In the event of cancellation, you will be given at least 6 weeks notice in writing and offered the following options:

1. Join a different tour
2. Choose a self guided or semi-escorted tour based on a similar itinerary as the tour you have already chosen
3. Agree to pay a supplement that will allow us run the tour with a smaller number of passengers booked
4. Receive a full refund

If we manage to operate the tour with less than 6 people, we will make the necessary changes with transport to ensure your itinerary stays the same. We may also have to have local assistants in each town/city instead of a 'through' tour leader. If these changes are made, you will be notified before the tour departure date.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of travel that each tour member obtains their own up to date travel insurance to cover medical or accidental costs.

Credit Card / Cash

Only Citibank (24 hours / found in major cities only), some 7/11 Convenience Store ATM's, Post Office ATM's (normal business hours only) and more recently Shinsei Bank ATM's will accept foreign credit cards for cash withdrawals. You will need your PIN number. It is advisable to bring as much cash you need as possible – it is not always possible to use foreign-issued credit cards in Japan!

We recommend to budget between 5,000 – 10,000JPY per day per person (when accommodation and rail pass has been included). If you are taking part in a Small Group Tour, this figure may be less as your activities and places of interest will keep you busy hence less time to spend money. Please consult our travel experts for advice based on your own itinerary.

Luggage

Porter service is not included in any of our tours so be prepared to carry your own suitcase. There will be times where we recommend you send your large bags to your next day destination using the reliable and reasonable internal courier service, used by most Japanese themselves known as Takkyubin.

We recommend you only bring ONE light suitcase weighing no more than 15 KG. A case with wheels is recommended. Japanese airports are very strict about weight and usually charge ¥3,000 per extra kilo for excess baggage on departure.

Coin Lockers are found in most train stations. This is a safe and very convenient option if you arrive to your next destination before check in time. Alternatively, most hotels will store your luggage if you arrive prior to check-in. Large lockers are also available for bigger suitcases – but they tend to be in the bigger stations only. Lockers cost between 200JPY – 400JPY per day.

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 the metropolitan cities where you won't know what to expect. Women dress quite modestly but 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.

Time

It is advisable not to go to MacDonald's 10 minutes before your train leaves - they won't wait. A common surprise to most travellers in Japan is the punctuality of services, especially 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 your platform and location to wait to board your train. The bullet train will arrive at 11.11 and leave 10 seconds later so there is really no time for wasting, rushing, or getting lost.

Language

Surprisingly, you will find little or no English once you leave the main cities. For this reason it is advisable to either carry a pocket phrase book, go on a Small Group Tour, or consult with us before you leave for Japan. Advance planning will make your trip to Japan a lot more worthwhile and comfortable.

Japan Rail Pass

Most of our tours include a Japan Rail Pass. It is up to you, the passenger, to ensure that this is not lost. If you lose this, your train journeys must be paid for on the spot and no refunds will be available.

Visas, Airport Security & Documentation

Passengers carrying an EU/US/AUS passport are exempt from obtaining a visa to enter Japan. Visas can be validated for up to six months or less. For more information on visas in Japan visit http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa

Since November 2007, security checks on entering an international airport in Japan require passengers to give their fingerprints and photo. This data is kept on file and processed at the immigration area.

Tipping

Tipping is not a custom in Japan. You should not leave any spare change in restaurants, taxis, or hotels. In the event of doing so, the staff members are likely to chase you thinking you forgot your money!! Although tipping tour guides is optional, it is not expected. As inbound tourism has grown in Japan over the years, so too have foreign customs including tips to guides. Instead of tipping guides, we recommend to bring a small gift from your country to show your appreciation to him/her. Japanese people love food so something local, e.g. chocolates or sweets, are always welcomed.

So what next?

If you are still unsure about going to Japan and have more questions, please contact us today. We are available to answer any doubts or queries either in person or over the phone. We welcome meeting people in person (where possible) however, if this is not possible due to geographical distances, all travel plans can be easily dealt with over the phone and by email. And remember, if you have no ideas, we have lots, and are ready to share them with you. So, contact us today to start planning your holiday of a lifetime!



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