

Springtime in Japan

19th to 26th March 2017 (Ref. 1065)

Tokyo ▶ Kanazawa ▶ Kyoto



What's Included

- ✓ Fulltime services of your InsideJapan tour leader
- ✓ Six nights' hotel accommodation in Tokyo and Kyoto, and one night accommodation at a traditional Japanese ryokan inn in Kanazawa
- ✓ Tea Ceremony and Private guide service for one day in Kyoto
- ✓ Selected sightseeing in Tokyo, Kanazawa and Kyoto
- ✓ Day trips to Hiroshima, Miyajima and Himeji
- ✓ Arrival and departure airport transfers by shared shuttle bus
- ✓ All transport between each destination
- ✓ Seven-day Japan Rail Pass, Kyoto 2 Day Pass
- ✓ IC transport card with 2,500 yen credit for city transport
- ✓ Breakfast everyday plus three dinners
- ✓ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Kyoto
- ✓ Your InsideJapan Info-Pack

Solo travellers: payment of a single supplement is mandatory for this tour. The single supplement is £ 390.00 per person (subject to room availability). This guarantees a single room at the Western style hotels (6 nights). Solo travellers will be expected to share with another passenger of the same sex at the Japanese ryokan inn (1 night).

What's NOT Included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Entrance fees including those for temples, shrines and museums unless otherwise specified
- ✗ Any local transport (subways, taxis, buses) unless covered by the included passes
- ✗ Baggage handling & luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified

Key Information

This tour is the perfect introduction to the fascinating culture of Japan. Travelling in springtime means you should have a chance to catch the beautiful cherry blossom for which Japan is famous. This time of year is also known for its lovely warm, dry climate.

Your expert InsideJapan tour leader will accompany you throughout the holiday, staying in the same hotels, so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time. They are available pretty much all day every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion! If you would like to break away from the group and do something different, they will be available to give you advice, and help you plan your day.

Your tour leader will introduce you to fantastic experiences and local restaurants – many of which would be impossible to find by yourself or intimidating to enter alone.

Max Group Size: 16

Accommodation: Six nights' accommodation in well located, three star hotels in Tokyo and Kyoto. One night accommodation at a traditional Japanese ryokan inn in Kanazawa.

Single Supplement: This tour has a single supplement. This guarantees a single room at the Western style hotels (6 nights). Solo travellers will be expected to share with another group member of the same sex at the Japanese ryokan inn (1 night).

Transport: Please note that most transfers are by public transport making use of Japan's first-rate transport network.

Luggage: We highly recommend that to make your stay more enjoyable you pack reasonably light. Large suitcases will be an inconvenience to you. One small case or bag with wheels or a rucksack are most appropriate for this tour as you will have to carry your bags for short distances and some stations do not have escalators or elevators/lifts. During the tour we also take advantage of next-day luggage forwarding; therefore, you will also need a small overnight bag for use when your main suitcase has been forwarded ahead.



International Flights: This tour starts in Tokyo for arrivals at Tokyo Narita Airport or Tokyo Haneda Airport. The tour finishes in Kyoto for departures from Osaka Kansai Airport.

Check-in: Please note that rooms at the Tokyo hotel are only available from 3pm. (You can, however, securely leave your luggage at the front desk at any time).

Fitness: Even when not using public transport, sightseeing in Japan often involves walking between sights, climbing up steps in temples and being 'on the go' for much of the day. To enjoy this tour you should be of moderate fitness, able to walk and climb stairs without difficulty and able to maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

Travel Insurance: One of our conditions of booking is that you have insurance to cover you for medical costs in Japan. Please make sure to read and agree to InsideJapan Tours' [Terms and Conditions](#) too.



Get beneath the surface

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ITINERARY IN BRIEF

	Location	Day to Day Detail	Accommodation
Day 1	Tokyo	Shared Shuttle Bus from Narita Airport to Tokyo Hotel First Night Meal	The B Ikebukuro
Day 2	Tokyo	Tokyo Sightseeing: Asakusa, Sumida River Boat Cruise and Hama-rikyu Gardens	The B Ikebukuro
Day 3	Kanazawa	Luggage forwarding Tokyo to Kyoto Bullet Train from Tokyo to Kanazawa Taxi transfer from Kanazawa Station to Sumiyoshiya Ryokan Kanazawa Sightseeing: Kenrokuen Gardens and Nagamachi Samurai District	Sumiyoshiya Ryokan
Day 4	Kyoto	Taxi transfer from Sumiyoshiya Ryokan to Kanazawa Station Limited Express Train from Kanazawa to Kyoto Taxi transfer from Kyoto Station to Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto Kyoto Sightseeing: Nijo Castle	Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto
Day 5	Kyoto	Private Guide Service in Kyoto Tea Ceremony Kyoto sightseeing: Ryoanji and Kinkakuji	Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto
Day 6	Kyoto	Day Trip to Hiroshima and Miyajima	Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto
Day 7	Kyoto	Day Trip to Himeji Farewell Dinner	Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto
Day 8	Kyoto	Shared Shuttle Bus from Kyoto to Osaka Kansai Airport	

Detailed day-by-day

Day 1 - Shared Shuttle Bus from Narita Airport to Tokyo Hotel

You will be met on arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport today and taken by shuttle bus to your hotel in Tokyo. Please note that as other people will be in the same bus there may be a few stops before you arrive at your hotel (maximum of 3 other stops). Journey time is around 2 hours and this is a comfortable and easy way to make today's transfer. Look out for some great views as you ride the elevated highways into town.

- 3000 Yen IC Card

Japan has a public transport system unrivalled anywhere in the world for efficiency, cleanliness and coverage. The daily number of journeys on the Tokyo subway alone is in excess of 8 million yet despite its huge scope and vast number of lines navigating the system is really rather easy. As always the Japanese are pushing the boundaries with their transport technology and now there is a convenient tap-in, tap-out 'IC Card' that covers not just Tokyo's public transport but the entire country. You will be using this card for sightseeing over the course of the tour.

- Welcome Dinner

This evening we have included a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. This will be a fantastic opportunity for you to get to know your tour leader and the other tour members better whilst sampling some of the delicious cuisine that Japan has to offer.

Overnight - The B Ikebukuro - Incl. B'fast

Day 2 - Tokyo Sightseeing: Asakusa, Sumida Boat and Hamarikyu

- Asakusa

Asakusa sprung up in the middle of the Edo period when the Tokugawa shogun, tired of his city being over-run with vice and frivolous amusements, decided to banish all those engaged in the world of popular entertainment to outside the city walls.

Thus Asakusa was born, and the district retains much of the atmosphere and charm of that time, giving visitors a chance experience just what Tokyo may have been like before the second world war and the subsequent economic miracle of the 70s and 80s transformed the capital into the urban monster we see today.

- Sumida River Boat Trip

The Suijo Bus operates cruises from Asakusa Pier to Hinode Pier in 40 minutes taking in no less than 12 different bridges along the way! An English taped commentary and pamphlet are supplied to explain the passing scenery and as well as being a great sightseeing option, the boat is a good way to travel from the Hamarikyu Tea Garden or the Hinode Pier.

- Hamarikyu Gardens

Just minutes away from the commercial hubbub of Ginza and hemmed in by urban development on all sides, Hamarikyu remains a leafy pocket of tranquillity seemingly unchanged since Edo times, when it was used by the shoguns and aristocracy for wild-duck hunting, tea ceremonies and riding practice. The formal areas of the garden were laid out in 1704, under the direction of Shogun Ienobu. It was here that Emperor Meiji met with visiting US President Ulysses Grant in 1879. The focus of the park is the Shio-iri no ike Pond, in the centre of which is a fully reconstructed traditional tea house, reached by a bridge with beautiful wisteria trellises. One feature of the garden is that the ponds fill from the bay, and so the water level rises and falls with the tides.

The surrounding fields and woods are home to many species of bird life, while the wetlands attract tufted ducks and other migratory wild fowl. There are impressive displays of blossom, including ume plum, cherry, azalea, wisteria, irises, peonies, hydrangeas and camellias, according to the season. The garden is also home to a small army of resident cats and more dragonflies than you have ever seen in one place in your life.

Overnight - The B Ikebukuro - Incl. B'fast

Day 3 - Luggage forwarding Tokyo to Kyoto

Your tour leader will help you to forward your luggage on to your hotel in Kyoto. This service transports your luggage overnight meaning that you can then travel with a small overnight bag without worrying about carrying a large suitcase.

- 7 Day Japan Rail Pass

Your package includes the 7 Day Rail Pass (Ordinary Car). The pass entitles you to unlimited travel on any trains in the extensive Japan Railways (JR) network. This includes all of the famous Shinkansen bullet trains (with the exception of the Nozomi Shinkansen). Today you will start using your 7 Day Japan Rail Pass.

- Bullet Train from Tokyo to Kanazawa

The much-anticipated Hokuriku Shinkansen line opened on the 14th March 2015 connecting the garden city of Kanazawa to Tokyo. The Kagayaki is the fastest train on this line, and journey time direct to Kanazawa is now just 2 hours 28 minutes to cover the 460km (285 mile) journey.

- Taxi transfer from Kanazawa Station to Sumiyoshiya Ryokan

- Kenrokuen

Kenrokuen is considered one of the three most beautiful landscape gardens in Japan, along with Kairakuen in Mito and Korakuen in Okayama. The garden, first laid out in 1676 and enlarged to its present size of about 10 hectares in the early 1800s, was an outer garden of Kanazawa Castle. True to the name of Kenroku (literally - combined six), it boasts six prominent features, namely, vastness, solemnity, careful arrangement, venerability, coolness (induced by running water) and scenic charm.

- Nagamachi Samurai District

Once inhabited by samurai, this area retains its winding streets and tile-roofed mud walls. In particular, Nomura Samurai House is well worth a visit for its decorative garden.

Overnight at Sumiyoshiya Ryokan - Incl B'fast And Dinner

Day 4 - Taxi transfer from Sumiyoshiya to Kanazawa Station

Limited Express Train from Kanazawa to Kyoto
This morning you will travel by limited express train from Kanazawa to Kyoto. From Kanazawa it is a 2 hour journey by direct train on to Kyoto.

- Taxi transfer from Kyoto Station to Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto

- Kyoto Two Day Pass

For the next couple of days you will use the Kyoto Two Day Pass to transfer between the key sights in Kyoto. This pass allows you unlimited travel for two days on Kyoto's buses and subway.

- Kyoto Sightseeing: Nijo Castle

This afternoon you will begin exploring Kyoto with a visit to Nijo Castle. The castle was built by the Tokugawa Shogun in 1603, although he rarely stayed there. Highlights of the castle include the gorgeous details and a specially constructed 'nightingale' floor to warn of approaching visitors.

Overnight -Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto - Incl. B'fast

Day 5 - Private Guide Service in Kyoto

Today you will be accompanied on your sightseeing around Kyoto by one of our experienced local guides.

- Tea Ceremony

Could there be anything more Japanese than peeling back a sliding screen door, kneeling on a tatami mat floor and slowly learning the revered art of the tea ceremony? This morning we will arrange for you to take part in a simple tea ceremony in the company of knowledgeable members of the Women's Association of Kyoto (WAK Japan). This association runs a range of experiences aimed at giving overseas visitors an insight into Japanese culture with full English explanation. The experience takes place at WAK's headquarters in central Kyoto and lasts around an hour. Here you will learn all about the tea ceremony, from choice of tea to the careful and deliberate movements in the different stages of preparing and serving the tea.

- Kinkaku-ji Temple

Kinkaku-ji, or the Golden Pavilion, is perhaps the most famous temple in all Japan. It is an exact replica of the 15th century structure that was burned down in 1950. Rebuilt in 1955, the stunning gold façade makes a lovely reflection in the 'mirror pond'.

- Ryoanji

In this world-renowned rock garden, 15 stones, which vary in shape and size, are laid out in an exquisite balance. Despite its limited size, the garden expresses infinite space. This is the supreme example of a dry landscape garden.

Overnight -Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto - Incl. B'fast

Day 6 - Day Trip to Hiroshima and Miyajima

Today you will use your Japan Rail Pass to take a day trip down to Hiroshima and to visit the nearby island of Miyajima.

- Peace Memorial Park

Hiroshima's most famous sight is, of course, the A-Bomb Dome which stands forlornly just across the river from the Peace Memorial Park, a timeless

reminder of the devastation wrought upon the city some half a century ago. Before the dropping of the bomb the building served as the Industrial Promotion Hall. Now it is propped up ruin and is the only such building still standing.

The Peace Memorial Park is situated across the T-shaped Aioi-bashi Bridge, rumoured to have been the bombardier's point of aim when dropping the bomb. The park includes the cenotaph which lists the names of all known victims of the bomb (excluding those Koreans who were killed), and provides a frame for the dome across the river. Beneath the cenotaph burns a non-eternal flame, set to burn until the last atomic bomb has been destroyed at which point it will be extinguished.

- The Peace Memorial Museum

The museum drives home its simple anti-atomic warfare message with a harrowing level of force. The depiction of destruction and suffering is choking and is sure to make one ponder what devastation could be wrought by modern atomic weapons.

- Miyajima sightseeing

Miyajima Island, separated from the mainland by the 500m-wide Onoseto strait, is one of the many islands in Hiroshima Bay. The island is roughly rectangular, with a length of 5.6 miles (9km) and width of 3.7 miles (6km). Mount Misen, Mount Komagabayashi, and Mount Iwafune are located on Miyajima, and all three tower over the shoreline of this mountainous island. Along the mountain range, large granite boulders are exposed on the surface, adding a change of character to the scenery.

Since ancient times, Miyajima has been revered and worshipped. Because of this the virgin forests of Miyajima are one of the best preserved among the islands of the Seto Inland Sea. The luxuriant forests of Mount Misen are just one example of the vast variety of natural settings found on this island.

The "floating" Torii gate of Itsukushima shrine is the most famous sight here and probably in all of western Japan – it's a spectacular place and especially atmospheric after dark.

Overnight -Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto - Incl. B'fast

Day 7 - Day Trip to Himeji

This morning you will once again use your Japan Rail Pass to make a day trip, this time to visit the fabulous castle at Himeji.

The history of the castle begins in 1333 with the construction of a fort by Norimura Akamatsu, the ruler of Harima (now known as the Himeji region). Later in 1581, a three-storied castle was built by the daimyo Hideyoshi Toyotomi - he needed a strong fort at a time when Japan was in a state of continual conflict. Considered one of the first examples of Japanese castle architecture, Himeji castle was enlarged and finally remodelled to its final state by Terumasa Ikeda, son-in law of the Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa, in 1601.

Himeji became a vital defensive position for the Tokugawa Shogunate government. European castles dating from approximately this same period include Chenonceau and Chambord in France. All such castles, including Himeji, were actually lived in by lords. But while European castles were built were built of stone, Japanese castles were

predominantly wooden structures. A total of 360 tons of wood and 75,000 tiles weighing 3,000 tons were used in the construction of Himeji Castle making it the largest extant castle in Japan.

Fortunately, Himeji Castle has never been damaged by earthquake, fire or warfare, even during the Second World War. That is one of the reasons why Himeji Castle has kept its original form for nearly 400 years. In 1993, Himeji Castle was registered on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

- Farewell dinner

As your trip draws to a close you will enjoy one final dinner together as a group at one of our favourite restaurants in Kyoto.

Overnight -Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto - Incl. B'fast

Day 8 - Shared Shuttle Bus from Kyoto to Osaka Kansai Airport

Today you will be transferring from your hotel in Kyoto to Kansai Airport located on an artificial island in Osaka Bay. The taxi shuttle bus holds up to 9 passengers and will pick up other customers before heading off to the airport. Journey time from Kyoto will be in the region of 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Accommodation

Tokyo - The B Ikebukuro

Two nights

The B is a great hotel located just a couple of minutes' walk from Ikebukuro station. Recently opened and with modern, nicely designed rooms all with free wi-fi internet this is a very comfortable base for your stay in Tokyo. The hotel has a complimentary internet PC in the lobby and friendly staff who speak some English. The shops and restaurants of Ikebukuro are right on your doorstep whilst the large station here has connections for all of Tokyo including direct trains to Shinjuku, Ueno and Tokyo central station.

Kanazawa - Sumiyoshiya Ryokan

One Night

Located just a short walk from the recently rebuilt castle and famous Kenrokuen gardens, the Sumiyoshiya is a wonderful traditional inn. Parts of the building are more than 300 years old making this the oldest surviving structure in Kanazawa. You will be treated to wonderful food and fantastic service and all the main sights are within walking distance.

Kyoto - Royal Hotel & Spa Kyoto

Four Nights

This smart hotel was remodelled in 2005 and offers sleek modern guestrooms in a great central Kyoto location. As the name suggests the hotel also includes a Clarins spa on site as well as a number of fine restaurants. The hotel is just a couple of minutes' walk from the central Kawaramachi shopping dining and entertainment area, and the famous Gion geisha district is just 10 minutes on foot. Free wi-fi internet is available in all rooms.

More tour information

Meals

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements and we will ensure that all included meals meet your specific needs.

Visa requirements

Citizens of the UK, USA, CAN, AUS & NZ do not require an entry visa for Japan. If your home country is not listed here, please check with the Japanese embassy or consulate in your home country for information on visa requirements.

Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English-speaking tour leader who is a resident of Japan and a strong speaker of the local language. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels and ryokan, so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time.

Your tour leader is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace, yet s/he is available pretty much all day every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion!

Please note that the tour leader reserves the right to deny participation in an activity if s/he feels that it is in the safety or best interest of you and/or any other members of the group (e.g. for any Mount Fuji climb, proper hiking gear and a reasonable level of fitness are required - both being generally assessed by the tour leader. Similarly, dangerous weather conditions may lead to cancellation of such an activity).

Flexibility

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day; your daily schedule might need to be changed due to weather, traffic or other circumstances. Each morning the tour leader will outline what s/he is going to do that day, and if you would like to break away from the group and do something different, s/he will be available to give you advice, and help you plan your day.

Crime and personal safety

Japan is perhaps the world's safest country and personal crime is almost unheard-of. You are extremely unlikely to have anything stolen whilst you are in Japan and the likelihood of being threatened in any way is very small indeed. It is not uncommon to leave your wallet, phone, camera or laptop in a bar or restaurant and return hours later to find your lost property waiting for you. However, you should still take the usual precautions: keep large amounts of money out of sight and consider using a money belt; in your hotel room keep your valuables packed away and keep an eye on your bag and other personal effects when out and about.

