



SMALL GROUP TOURS

SPRING 2010 - AUTUMN 2011

歓迎



get beneath the surface

www.insidejapantours.com



“ Japan was my ultimate trip of a lifetime and so I was very careful about picking the right package... I highly recommend this tour and cannot fault one aspect of it. I am already looking at planning my next trip with InsideJapan in the near future ”

Paul Corlett



AWARD WINNING
JAPAN SPECIALIST



InsideJapan Tours is an independent company created to bring Japan to anybody who wants to discover this unique country. Our expertly planned, flexible, small group tours, take you beneath the surface to discover more of Japan!

With an extraordinary diversity of culture and nature, Japan makes for a unique and fascinating holiday destination. InsideJapan Tours offers a choice of ten different small group tour itineraries, transporting you from the snowy wilderness of Hokkaido to the beaches of the Japan Sea Coast; from the shimmering Golden Temple in Kyoto to the soaring peaks of the Japan Alps. Offering a fascinating blend of classic sightseeing and hidden gems, we continue to strike out even further afield into Japan's more remote and infrequently visited regions. **Kyushu Elements** will bring you to the volcanic landscapes of the southern regions, whereas **Japan Sea Coast** explores the rural and beautiful

western seaboard. Finally our **Winter Highlights** tour combines the best of this magical season with spectacular frozen landscapes, rare birdlife, huge ice sculptures at the Sapporo Snow Festival, hot spring baths and the famous snow monkeys!

For travellers on a tighter budget, our **Japan Unmasked** tour offers a fantastic 13 night mix of cities, nature, culture, temples, nightlife, cycling and monkeys (!) at a fantastic price. For this tour we have stripped out a few of our usual inclusions but you will, of course, still have the services of your expert tour leader, an essential ingredient in the InsideJapan tour experience.

Japan offers something for everyone. We hope that inside the pages of this brochure, in the itineraries we have carefully crafted to bring you the very best Japan has to offer, you will find the tour that inspires you.

Small Group Tours 2010/11

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2 Introducing Japan

Stretching over 2000 miles from the northernmost tip to the southernmost islands, Japan is an extraordinarily diverse country made up of thousands of islands. Our small group tours focus on the 4 main islands of Hokkaido in the north, Kyushu in the south, rural Shikoku and the largest island, Honshu.

Each of our ten tours offer a mix of the classic sights with the lesser know gems. From Mt Fuji and geisha to mountain temples and Zen rock gardens, our thoroughly researched tours deliver you the very best of Japan.

Japan is made up of four islands as well as the southernmost islands of Okinawa. Each island has its own charms from golden beaches to snow capped mountains, ancient temples to towering skyscrapers. You can explore and discover each one of them with us.

Most of our small group tours concentrate on Honshu but we have several tours that reach out further into the less explored parts of Japan. These tours are perfect for those returning to Japan, or for first timers who want to get off the tourist trail. Our **Kyushu Elements** tour visits the sun blessed southern Island of Kyushu with its volcanic landscapes and steaming hot spring baths. If the north appeals, then come with us on **A Northern Soul** where you will delve deep into the rural heart of Japan. Our **Hidden Japan** tour visits Shikoku with its beautiful gorges, swirling waters and ancient legends.

Japan's islands have something to offer every traveller. Our **Winter Highlights** tour, offers a unique chance to experience the beauty of Hokkaido in winter and explore the snowy wilds of the Shiretoko nature reserve whereas our newest tour, **Japan Unmasked**, offers a wide-ranging view of Japan at a fantastic budget price. Whatever your interests and budget, we want to give you the best trip possible and show you all that Japan has to offer.



InsideJapan Tours was founded in October 2000 by Simon King and his university friend Alastair Donnelly. Having spent three years living and working in Japan, they both shared a desire to give others the opportunity to experience the wonder and mystery of this amazing country.

From your first email or phone call our small team of Japan experts will be there to make sure your Japan holiday is everything you are hoping for and more. InsideJapan is unique in that all our staff have extensive experience of living and working in Japan, speak Japanese and can provide you with the advice and information you need when planning your Japan holiday.

We have utilised this speciality knowledge to the full to craft the group tours in this brochure. So whether you have your heart set on the expansive winter wilderness of Hokkaido, the volcanic landscapes of Kyushu, the cherry blossoms in Kyoto, or the sleepy seaside towns of the Japan Sea Coast, you will find the very best itineraries here.

We will provide you with top level customer service both before your departure and throughout your stay in Japan. When you call our UK office, you will always be able to speak with someone who is knowledgeable about your tour and can answer all those important pre-booking and pre-departure questions. Once in Japan you will be in the capable hands of your InsideJapan tour leader, each of whom has extensive experience of living and working in Japan, speak Japanese and most importantly have a genuine love and passion for the country. And of course, if you have any special requests, please do not hesitate to ask.

Once you have read through the brochure please visit our web-site – **www.insidejapantours.com** – for full details on each tour including detailed day-by-day itineraries, up-to-date pricing, dates & availability and tour dossiers to download in PDF format. You will also find lots of information about Japan, Japanese culture and even the latest news headlines!

At any time please get in touch and your first step towards making your Japan dreams a reality. We can be contacted by phone on UK + 44 (0)117 314 4620 or by email - **info@insidejapantours.com**. If you would like to visit us at our office please give us a call to arrange an appointment and we would be delighted to discuss any of the tours and your holiday plans in person.



Our Tour Concept

Our tours are designed to give everyone the chance to experience the wonders of Japan without having to pay excessively for the pleasure. We travel by public transport, as the Japanese do, allowing you to get beneath the surface of this fascinating country and encounter and interact with its people and culture. Every train ride in Japan, whether it is on the Nozomi Super Express Shinkansen (Bullet Train) travelling at over 300km an hour, or on the scenic switchback train winding its way through the mountains in the Hakone Fuji National Park, is an experience in itself.

Each of our small group tours (maximum 12-14 people) aims to be as flexible as possible, thus making sure that you can see and do everything that you want to. You are free to spend as much or as little time with the group as you wish.*

Your tour leader**

Your tour leader will accompany the group throughout, staying in the same accommodation and travelling with you from destination to destination. Your tour leader is not a professional guide, but rather a Japanese speaker who is experienced in living and working in Japan and will be able to give personal insights about Japanese culture and society. Your tour leader is there to make sure that you get the absolute most out of your time in Japan.

Our small team of tour leaders are passionate about Japan and by the end of the tour you will be too!



Single Supplements

On most of our tours we do NOT charge single supplement for single travellers*. On all tours with the exception of Japan Unmasked, single travellers are guaranteed a single room in all Western style accommodation. However, in Japanese style ryokan and minshuku, single rooms are not usually available and even on tours where a single supplement applies you may be asked to share with a fellow traveller of the same sex. On Japan Unmasked single rooms will only be guaranteed at the first hotel in Tokyo. All other nights are on a sharing basis.

** Spring Elegance and Japan Enchantment both carry a single supplement. Please see our web-site for full details.*

Accommodation

On our tours we use a mixture of well-located Western style hotels and Japanese style family-run *minshuku* and elegant *ryokan*. All Western style establishments and most of the traditional inns have attached bathroom facilities. However, occasionally traditional inns only have shared bathroom arrangements. Please ask us for full details of accommodation used on each tour.

Meals

One thing we're sure you'll be looking forward to is indulging in the best of the local cuisine and Japan offers a myriad of delights for all food lovers. All our tours include breakfast everyday as well as a number of evening meals (Japan Unmasked includes only one evening meal). At InsideJapan we love Japanese food and strive to include the very best of Japan's amazing range of culinary styles on our tours.

Your tour leader will of course be giving you some of their personal recommendations on where to get the very best sushi or an extra delicious yakitori (chicken skewer).

Getting Around

Japan has an extremely efficient public transport system and we will be taking full advantage of this whilst on tour. Travelling as the Japanese do, journeys will be made using a wide variety of transport including trains, public buses, trams, ferries and of course the world famous Shinkansen, better known in the west as the 'Bullet Train'.

No two journeys will ever be the same!



Luggage

Travelling by public transport does of course mean that it is best to travel light as you will be carrying your own bags. Light, compact rucksacks or suitcases are ideal. All our tours include some next day delivery luggage forwarding so an overnight bag is also recommended.

Your Info-Pack

A few weeks before the tour starts, we will send out your Info-Pack which contains details of the itinerary, accommodation and transport plus sightseeing guides to all the places we will visit on the tour. Think of it as your own personalised guidebook to Japan!

International Flights

International flights are not included in our tour prices, giving our customers the freedom to source their own flights. However, we are always more than happy to arrange flights for our UK customers if required. Please let us know if you would like us to provide a quote.

Extra Nights

We always suggest that an extra night (or even two) at the start of the tour is a good option to help you settle in and get over jet-lag before the tour gets underway. We can also add extra nights after the tour, or even put together a fully-tailored add-on for you if you would like to explore Japan further after the tour is over.

Please let us know if this would interest you.

Dates and Prices

You won't find any prices or departure dates printed in our brochure. Instead, you will find all this information in the enclosed leaflet. However, prices do occasionally change to reflect moves in the exchange rate and we do add new departures during the year. Therefore, for the most up-to-date pricing, currently available departures and current availability please check our website – www.insidejapantours.com or give us a call.

As standard on ALL our tours

- No Local Payment
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- Excellent mix of quality Western style hotels and Japanese style *ryokan* and *minshuku*
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers***
- Breakfast everyday
- Several evening meals included on most tours (average of 7)
- Maximum group size of 12-14*
- Full time Tour Leader who has lived & worked Japan and has a real passion for the country
- Info-Pack full of sightseeing ideas and cultural tips
- Tokyo transport pass

* Maximum group size for Nature & Culture is 8, Japan Sea Coast and Kyushu Elements is 10

** A Japanese Tour Leader accompanies the Japan Enchantment tour

*** Up to 2 days before the tour starts and only applicable if staying in the tour hotel



From the thrills of the high tech metropolis of **Tokyo** to the serenity of Zen gardens and hidden temples in **Kyoto**, this journey along the ancient route of the Tokaido highway is a fantastic introduction to Japan's uniquely rich and vibrant culture.



Take your time over exquisitely presented traditional *kaiseki* cuisine in **Kamakura**, relax in the velvety-soft soothing volcanic waters of **Hakone's hot spring baths**, stroll amongst the *Geisha* of Kyoto's Gion district, experience the sound of the *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' thundering past at breathtaking speeds. Japan is a sensory experience like nowhere else. A feast for the eyes, ears and of course, the taste buds!

Combining modern, centrally-located business hotels with friendly traditional inns and transfers by public transport throughout; the Tokaido Trail also provides a slice of every day Japanese life. A chance to breakfast with the suited salary man, experience the ordered chaos of Tsukiji's early morning tuna auctions and slurp steaming hot *ramen* noodles in a stand up bar under the railway tracks.



Sumo

Sumo wrestling is the ancient traditional sport of Japan and provides a fascinating and at times dramatic spectacle for anyone lucky enough to make it to a “*basho*” or tournament. Fights can be over in a matter of seconds as one wrestler hauls his opponent over the straw bales and out of the ring or thrusts him to the ground. Yet this does not make for a lack of excitement; the tension in the arena builds to a climax as the wrestlers engage in the ritual face off before each bout begins with a thunderous clash of heads. Despite their often gargantuan size these guys can move like ballerinas, pirouetting in the ring to circle the opponent or spinning on a six-pence to evade a violent thrusting attack.

There are six tournaments a year and several of our tours offer the opportunity to check out the action. Please contact us for more details. Your Tour Leader will help you out with buying tickets and planning your transport to the arena. This will be a day out you will never forget and a chance to experience the full excitement of this amazing sport.



The included excursion day is an opportunity to visit any one of a number of fascinating destinations: The giant Buddha and tame deer of **Nara**; **Himeji's** magnificent original *Samurai* castle; the haunting museum and peace memorial park in **Hiroshima**; **Kanazawa**, home to the beautiful classical garden Kenrokuen. The hardest part is deciding where to go!

This 9 night tour brings you a menagerie of new sights, sounds, tastes and experiences at every turn and a collection of memories that will last a lifetime.

What's Included

- 9 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 3 evening meals
- 7 day Japan Rail Pass
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Luggage forwarding between Kamakura & Kyoto
- Guided walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

“ I Would recommend this trip to everyone. Best tour that I have taken.”

Raewyn, July 2009



Japan has a myriad of sights to see and experiences to be had and you will be amazed at how many of these we have managed to fit into our action packed Essential Honshu tour. Beginning in the spring time and continuing through the hot and steamy days of summer we will journey from the dazzling neon-lit districts of **Tokyo** to the star filled skies of **Kamikochi National Park**, deep in the heart of the **Japan Alps**.



The Essential Honshu offers something for every visitor to Japan. Whether you wish to marvel at the aesthetic beauty of **Kamakura's** giant statue of Buddha, play pachinko with the rows of dark-suited salary men in **Osaka**, or hike to the highest peaks of the Japan Alps. Along the way we'll be sampling *okonomiyaki* pancakes in old *shitamachi* downtown Tokyo, fine *kaiseki* cuisine in Kamakura and the best rustic cooking at our *minshuku* in **Takayama**. A tour for your taste buds as well as your eyes!



Climbing Mt. Fuji

Our July and August Essential Honshu departures give you the opportunity to climb the 3776 metres (12,388 feet) of Japan's most iconic symbol, the sacred Fuji-san. The classic time to ascend the mountain is at night, climbing through the darkness to reach the summit as the sun gradually appears over the horizon, lighting up the World in the most dramatic and beautiful way, revealing the mountains and lakes below and warming the weary limbs of the pilgrims who have struggled to the top. It is said a fool never climbs Mt. Fuji but you are more of a fool to climb it twice! And this is no easy stroll. You will need to be fully prepared with good hiking shoes, waterproofs (in case of rain), hat, gloves, and layers of clothing to keep out the cold. However, your gallant Tour Leader will be there every step of the way to coax and encourage you to the top! This is an experience you will never forget and once you have scrambled back down to the 5th Station you will have time to reflect on standing on the very top of Japan



Our July and August departures bring the opportunity to climb to the summit of **Mt. Fuji**, Japan's most sacred mountain and the symbol of a nation. You will stay overnight in a mountain hut before making the ascent to the summit in time to see the sun rise over the distant horizon and light up the world. Mineral-rich hot spring waters await you back in **Hakone** to soak away those aches and pains!

A thrilling chance encounter with a *Geisha* in historic **Kyoto** scurrying to her evening appointments contrasted with a visit to the fashion capital of Osaka sums up the unique eccentricities of Honshu, Japan's largest and most diverse island. With accommodation in quality business hotels and simple, family run traditional inns, the Essential Honshu provides a remarkably diverse tour at an affordable price: the perfect trip for anyone wanting to see the best of Japan's urban and rural extremes.

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals
- Tokyo and Hakone transport passes
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Luggage forwarding between Kamakura & Osaka and Takayama & Tokyo
- Guided walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" This wasn't so much a holiday as a cultural immersion! A totally amazing experience."
Alison, August 2009



DESTINATIONS

TOKYO

HIKONE

MIYAJIMA

MATSUYAMA

KOTOHIRA

NARA

MT. KOYA

KYOTO

Japan is a nation shrouded in mystery; folklore full of tales of beautiful *Geisha*, fearless *Samurai* and ruthless warlords; a nation of ghosts and spirits. On Hidden Japan you will venture far from the buzzing crowds and flashing lights of **Tokyo**, to the dramatic valleys and ravines of **Shikoku Island**, the romance of **Miyajima Island** and the spiritual retreat of **Mt.Koya**.

Set against the backdrop of the cherry blossom in Spring and the fiery reds and oranges of the leaves in Autumn, Hidden Japan is a voyage of discovery. Tokyo is your dramatic introduction to Japan as we explore the futuristic streets of Shinjuku and the mazy back alleys round Sensoji; Tokyo's oldest temple with a history stretching back 400 years to the start of the Edo era when *Samurai* came to pray for good fortune. An immense city but one where the street level detail, the sounds, sights and smells, gradually reveal the soul of the capital.

Step back in time exploring the samurai castle at Hikone; soak away your cares at Japan's oldest hot spring baths in **Matsuyama**; make the pilgrimage to the top of **Kotohira's** Kompira-san with its 900 steps, before sitting down to a dinner of luxurious kaiseki cuisine at a beautiful traditional inn; stroll through the secret temples and hidden shrines of **Kyoto**. With stops in **Hiroshima** to visit the atomic war museum and peace park, **Nara** where we will see Japan's largest statue of Buddha housed in the World's largest wooden building (as well as feeding the sacred deer!), the Hidden Japan tour takes you from the present to show you a glimpse of the past.

A truly unforgettable experience of a unique country.

Samurai Japan

The Japanese *Samurai* has fascinated and captured the imagination of children and adults alike for hundreds of years. Leading their lives by the moral code called "*bushido*" (the way of the warrior) their lives were ruled by loyalty to their leader, self discipline, respect and ethical behaviour. This meant that *Samurai* were expected to follow any order that was given by their leader, even that of ritual suicide. This respect for superiors continues to this day in Japanese culture. These skilled and deadly warriors not only ruled Japan by the sword but were also highly trained in the arts; calligraphy and tea ceremony were just as important as battle skills and swordsmanship.

Visitors to Japan can get a feel for what life must have been like and learn more about the *Samurai* by visiting one of Japan's many castles. Although most of today's castles are reconstructions, the originals having been destroyed usually through fire or natural disaster, the "Hidden Japan" tour presents the opportunity to visit two of the eight remaining original *Samurai* Castles. Hikone Castle, with its unique combination of architectural styles has been designated a national treasure (an honour shared by only three other castles in Japan), whilst Matsuyama Castle commands great views of the surrounding area.



What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals and 2 lunches
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Hiroshima and Miyajima local transport pass
- Luggage forwarding between Miyajima & Kotohira
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- Full day touring by private minibus in the Iya Valley
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" We were also fascinated by this ancient/modern culture, and it felt so very different from anything we had experienced before."

Gillian, October 2009



As Japan unwraps itself from the blanket of winter, it bursts into life and reaches full bloom in spring. Cherry blossom fever sweeps the nation as your journey captures the heart of Japan swathed in pink. Join the viewing parties in **Tokyo** or stroll amongst the petals in **Kyoto** - the *sakura* are never far away.

This tour captures Japan in all its glory, from the skyscrapers of Tokyo to the high peaks of the **Japan Alps**. Relive the *Samurai* battles of old through the windows of **Matsumoto Castle**, take a stroll through the immaculate gardens of **Kanazawa** then be whisked high into the stunning mountains and on to the market town of **Takayama**. Here the wonders of the day will be matched by tempting local delicacies and impeccable service during your stay in a beautiful traditional *ryokan*.

A ride on the famous Shinkansen 'Bullet Train' delivers you into the Imperial city of Kyoto, the true capital of Japan's history and culture. Ancient temples lie hidden round every corner, waiting to be discovered whilst the beautiful doll like figures of *Geisha* totter gracefully between appointments.

In **Hakone**, take in the magnificent views of **Mt. Fuji** then lie back in one of the mineral rich natural hot springs, relax and soak up all that Japan has to offer.



An included Excursion Day allows you, using your 7 day Japan Rail Pass, to speed by *Shinkansen* for a day in **Hiroshima** or travel to the historic city of **Nara** to stroll the deer park and marvel at the Big Buddha sitting serenely within his huge wooden temple – all for no extra cost. With 4 delicious evening meals included and some real accommodation treats along the way, Spring Elegance is the perfect trip for a perfect time of year.

'Hanami' Cherry Blossom

Cherry blossom or '*sakura*' is considered by many as Japan's national flower and one of the most popular and colourful annual spectacles is when the cherry trees begin to blossom and varying shades of pink petals decorate the landscape. The unpredictability of nature makes the exact blooming date an issue of keen discussion in the early spring with the '*cherry blossom front*' a daily feature on the national news. The arrival of the blossom brings men, women and children out into the parks, setting out picnics beneath the trees for '*Hanami*' or flower viewing. Popular places such as Ueno Park or Yoyogi Park in Tokyo or Maruyama Park or Heian Shrine in Kyoto will be crowded with people using the blossom as a good excuse to eat, drink, (*sing karaoke!*) and celebrate the arrival of Spring.

Hanami is a ritual that has been observed for centuries; in the days of the *Samurai*, the cherry petals were seen to represent the warriors in the way that they would fall at the height of their beauty. The cherry blossom came to symbolize the *Samurai* way of life and *Hanami* parties became a popular event within the warrior class.



These days, everyone can enjoy the beauty of the cherry blossom and do so as part of Japanese culture and tradition.

During our Spring Elegance tours and our March/ April departures of Japan Enchantment, Tokaido Trail and Hidden Japan as long as the weather cooperates you will be able to experience the beauty of the *sakura* blossoms and the fun of *Hanami*.

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 4 evening meals
- 7 Day Japan Rail Pass
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- 'Miyako Odori' geisha spring dance tickets in Kyoto
- Guided walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Takayama, Takayama & Kyoto and Kyoto & Tokyo
- Hakone local transport pass
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" We felt the balance of things to do, choices available, accommodation, travel, organisation was all excellent - in honesty we wouldn't have changed a thing."

Ross, April 2008



DESTINATIONS

TOKYO

NAGANO

MATSUMOTO

TAKAYAMA

KANAZAWA

HIROSHIMA

KURASHIKI

KYOTO

TOKYO

Japan Unmasked unveils Japan for exactly what it is: One of the most exotic, exciting, intriguing destinations in the world. With one of our excellent Tour Leaders with you every step of the way, you'll have the freedom to create your own unique Japanese experience. Not only will we take you to some of the best destinations Japan has to offer, we will show you a side of the country that doesn't make it in the guidebooks!

Roam the back streets of Tokyo to find out what lies behind this world of closed doors before heading to the mountains for a temple stay; a peek at a world that few

foreigners ever see. The Japanese Alps region is a world away from the neon lights and costumed teenagers of Tokyo but no less interesting. Travel into the heart of Nagano's rural hinterlands to see the famous snow monkeys and then venture on to Matsumoto's imposing yet elegant "Black Crow" castle.

Step back in time as you wander through the back streets and markets of old town Takayama before dodging trap doors and secret passageways at Kanazawa's "Ninja Temple". The elegant beauty of Kenrokuen, touted as one of the three best gardens in the country, stands next to a

modern art museum that will literally have you looking to the sky!

Travel by 'Bullet Train' and streetcar to the epicenter of historic Hiroshima. A short ferry across the bay and you will find yourself staring out at "one of the three most beautiful views in Japan". Miyajima is famous for its floating torii gate, wild monkeys, friendly deer, and stunning views of the Inland Sea.

An optional bike ride through the countryside will take you past pagoda's and rice paddies; a wonderful experience of rural Japan.



Photograph – Tyler Palmer



The traditional tatami mat rooms of Nagano feel like another world when you find yourself surrounded by karaoke bars and pachinko parlors in downtown Kyoto. Yet round every corner in this ancient imperial city lie hidden oases of tranquil calm. We will explore the new and the old whilst venturing to the more traditional districts to discover what hides behind those sliding doors.

As our most affordable tour, Japan Unmasked caters to all. And with departures throughout the year you can share in the Japanese appreciation of every season for its unique beauty. For anyone who has been waiting for the perfect time to visit Japan, this is it!

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- 14 Day Japan Rail Pass
- Tokyo transport pass
- Breakfast every day
- 1 evening meal
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo and Takayama
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" The tour was simply amazing, fantastic value for money and I have been recommending it & InsideJapan Tours to all my friends! "

Zaid, September 2009



DESTINATIONS

TOKYO

HAKONE

KYOTO

SENDAI

NARUKO ONSEN

HIRAIZUMI

NIKKO

TOKYO

Japan is a nation of contrasts. On our Japan Enchantment tour you'll experience them all - from **Tokyo** as it hurtles headlong into the future, setting the pace for the rest of the world to follow, to **Hiraizumi**, peaceful and serene with its ancient temple complexes and beautiful gardens, the only remnants of a distant age when its warlords controlled the nation.

Led by expert Japanese tour leader Mr Yasuhiko Ota, the Enchantment tour is a chance to immerse yourself in the richness and variety of Japan's multifaceted culture; to marvel at the awe inspiring beauty of **snow-topped Mt. Fuji** with its near perfect symmetrical form soaring to the heavens; to discover the intricate temples and shrines of Toshogu in **Nikko**; to sample the delicious and the bizarre in **Kyoto's** Nishiki food market.

Having travelled west to Imperial Kyoto you'll head to the quieter rural climes of the Tohoku region with its paddy fields, jagged mountains and rugged coastlines stretching 500 miles northwards from Tokyo; a more peaceful and quieter Japan where life is lived at a slower pace and the old traditions live on. You'll cruise through **Matsushima Bay** with its sprinkling of tiny islands and seafont where freshly caught oysters are cooked over charcoal grills; soak in the revitalising



Miyako Odori

Every April and November, the usually hidden and secretive world of the geisha district throws open its doors for the mesmerising *Miyako Odori* - literally, Kyoto Dances. This month long festival is a celebration of the skill and art of the *geisha* tradition, combining lavish costumes and intricate dance moves with a unique style of music and song.

The mainly Japanese audience gets the rare opportunity to enjoy the grace and charm of these traditional dances usually only seen within the walls of the exclusive, invitation-only tea houses. Each of the highly stylised dances tells a story, set against the changing backdrops of the four seasons, echoing the ebb and flow of life and adding to the colour and festival atmosphere of the performance.

The *Miyako Odori* really is a chance to lose yourself in the romanticism and mystery of Japan's past. You are able to experience these dances as an included part of the Japan Enchantment and also our Spring Elegance tours.

What's Included

- 16 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 8 evening meals
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- 'Miyako Odori' geisha dance tickets in Kyoto
- Guided walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- Selected entrance fees in Kyoto, Naruko Onsen, Hiraizumi and Nikko
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Kyoto and Kyoto & Sendai
- Hakone local transport pass
- Full time services of your expert Tour Leader Mr Ota
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" The Japan Enchantment tour was a wonderful experience and a fantastic introduction to Japan. "

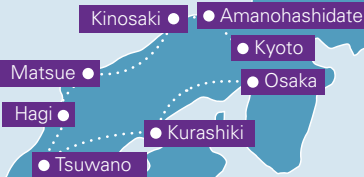
Steven, March 2009

hot springs of **Naruko Onsen**; and finally, return to Tokyo for a last night stay in Edo's entertainment district of Asakusa, a final chance to enjoy a night of splendid food and a flask of *sake*.

With hotels in the best locations, including stays at two of Japan's most historic properties, the Fujiya in Hakone and Kanaya in Nikko, 8 delicious evening meals included and your expert tour leader Ota-san to show you the sights, Japan Enchantment is a tour to savour.



SPECIALIST TOUR
10 People Maximum



DESTINATIONS

KYOTO

AMANOHASHIDATE

KINOSAKI ONSEN

MATSUE

HAGI

TSUWANO

KURASHIKI

OSAKA



Ancient temples and shrines, craggy coastlines, huge limestone caves, the old warehouses and willow-lined canals of **Kurashiki**, **Hagi's** *Samurai* residences and two of Japan's finest gardens in **Matsue** and **Okayama**.

Setting out in the warmth of summer, the cool sea breeze promises to make the Japan Sea Coast tour a refreshing journey of discovery through a stunning, yet relatively unexplored part of Japan.

The ancient capital of **Kyoto** marks the start of our adventures and provides a chance to wander amongst a myriad of temples and shrines before starting out on our journey north to the tranquil Japan Sea Coast; a taste of a more laid back way of life far removed from the bustling cities of the east coast regions and the tourist hot spots of the Kansai area. This tour offers something for all lovers of nature, the arts and traditional culture. The stunning 'bridge of heaven' at **Amanohashidate**, a two mile long sand bar which when viewed upside down appears to float miraculously skywards; Akiyoshi Caves

and the Chomonkyo Gorge with their stunning stalactites and cascading waterfalls; the 10 miles of sand dunes at **Tottori**. Each a unique and beautiful example of the natural wonders of Japan.

Matsue's Adachi Museum exhibiting some of Japan's most renowned modern artists all against a backdrop of an exquisite Japanese garden; Kurashiki's museums of traditional culture and merchant history; the traditional town of **Tsuwano** with a main street lined with temples and *sake* breweries, and a stream with 60 year old *koi* carp; all offering

Matsue

"There seems to be a sense of divine magic in the very atmosphere, through all the luminous day, brooding over the vapoury land, over the ghostly blue of the flood – a sense of Shinto" – Lafcadio Hearn, Glimpses of an Unfamiliar Japan

Sitting in the heart of the San'in region on Japan's western coast lies Matsue, the "City of Water". The name is well deserved; this small castle city rests on the banks of Lake Shinji between the *Nakanoumi* Lagoon and the shores of the Sea of Japan and straddling the *Ohashi* River.

Flanked in the north and south by mountain ranges, Matsue is blessed not only with stunning natural scenery but also an abundance of history. The impressive castle is one of the few original forts still standing in Japan today. With this imposing pine constructed castle comes a network of moats that link up with the river adding to the town's reputation of a city of water. The castle offers some beautiful views of the surrounding area and the canal boats provide a pleasant alternative view of the castle and the city. The surrounding streets meanwhile are lined with pine trees, old *Samurai* residences and tea houses.

Although the modern city came to prominence in the 17th century, its history stretches back, pre-dating written records to the ancient Izumo civilisation. *Izumo Taisha* is the oldest and one of the largest and most important *Shinto* shrines in Japan and referred to in Japan's most sacred writings, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. The temple is dedicated to the God of wedlock (*Okuninushi-no-Kami*) attracting couples from all over Japan praying for love and happiness.

Perhaps the most celebrated spot in Matsue is the majestic Lake Shinji where fresh water meets salt water offering a bounty of delicious fish and sea food for which the area is known.

Whilst the sunset over Lake Shinji is admired by many, the *Kyodo Ryori* style dinner that the bounty of the lake provides is admired even more by the locals. *Kyodo Ryori* consists of seven types of pallet-teasing dishes including tempura and sashimi making use of freshly caught fish and seafood.

Matsue of course has a modern side too and is home to some 150,000 people, but with its lakes, rivers and history so evident, the city oozes timelessness and serenity - a real taste of Edo-period Japan.

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 8 evening meals
- Entrance to Gembudo caves
- Entrance to Adachi Museum and Matsue Castle
- Entrance to Akiyoshidae Plateau
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack



fascinating insights into the artistic and cultural heritage and economic history of the nation. And finally, the chance to stroll in your traditional *yukata* through the streets of **Kinosaki Onsen**, stopping off at each local bathhouse for a dip in the soothing hot spring waters. Bursting into the modern day, the futuristic city of **Osaka** makes the perfect end to this comprehensive experience of Japan's natural beauty and cultural history. This tour has a **maximum group size of just 10 people**. With a mix of western hotels, some beautiful traditional inns and fantastic food the Japan Sea Coast is a voyage to remember.

" The tour enabled us to see a part of rural Japan that probably most tourists don't get to see and this was excellent and insightful."
Barry & Lynda, October 2008



Travelling by train, plane and ferry, with a mix of Western style hotels and traditional Japanese inns and with fantastic Japanese cuisine included on many evenings, Kyushu Elements is a genuinely unique tour. It will provide you with a breathtaking experience of Japan's stunning natural, urban and cultural diversity, and has a **maximum group size of just 10 people**.

Kyushu, the birthplace of Japanese civilization; an island of bubbling hot springs, steaming volcanoes, sandy beaches and lush green rain forests; 700 miles west of Tokyo and a whole world

away from the non-stop hustle and bustle of the capital. For centuries, Kyushu was Japan's only gateway to Asia and the rest of the world and as such has developed a unique character of its own. From the laid back historic port city of **Nagasaki**, to the steaming hot spring town of **Beppu**, via the beaches of **Miyazaki** and the stunning World Heritage ancient forests of **Yakushima Island**, Kyushu offers an abundance of natural treasures waiting to be discovered.

Having prayed for good fortune at Tokyo's Sensoji and explored the neon lit district of Shinjuku, we'll fly westward to stroll

the streets of **Nagasaki** where four hundred years ago Dutch traders first brought such wonders as coffee and measuring scales to Japan. We'll swap Nagasaki's stunning natural harbour for the volcanic Martian landscapes of Unzen Onsen and steaming slopes of **Mt Aso**; a close up reminder of the powerful forces of nature lying just beneath the surface.

For aficionados of bathing, Kyushu Elements provides chances aplenty to experience what the Japanese call '*Hadaka no Tomadachi*' or Naked Kinship with hot spring baths available at most destination stops.

Yakushima – the inspiration of Hayao Miyazaki

Yakushima Island was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993 and is famed for its giant Japanese cedar trees. Isolated from the Japanese mainland and with a unique terrain and climate, Yakushima is truly one of Japan's natural wonders

The best way to reach the ancient cedar trees is by taking one of the many wonderful walks and hikes – there's a good chance you will be joined by indigenous monkeys and deer on your way! Walking through these very same forests inspired the famous animator Hayao Miyazaki to create his epic masterpiece "*Princess Mononoke*" – we recommend watching the film in advance of your visit.

The dramatic coastline of this island should also be explored for its sandy beaches, hot spring baths and interesting sea life. Flying fish makes for a delicious lunch and is perfectly topped of by some locally grown sweet satsuma oranges or, if you're feeling bold, the local *shochu* fire-water is also worth a taste!

Little visited by foreign tourists, Yakushima is a world away from the bustle of city life and remains a very special and unspoilt area of Japan.

What's Included

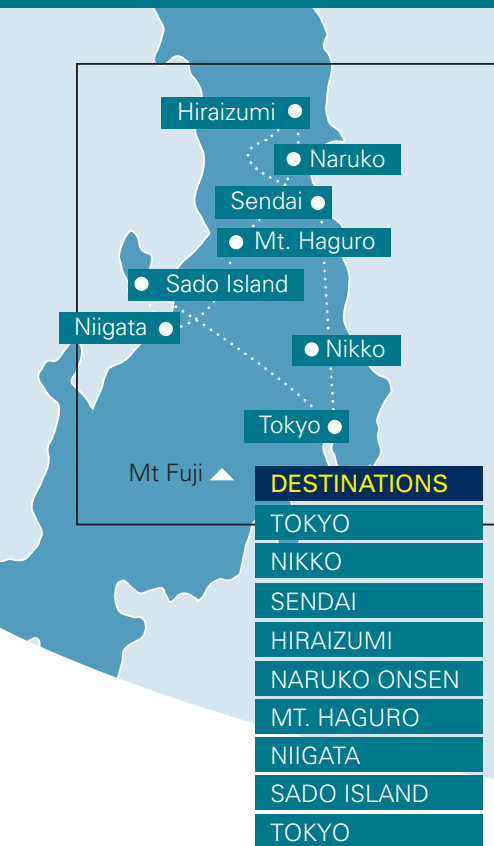
- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise
- Selected entrance fees in Mt Aso and Beppu
- Local guide in Yakushima
- Private Bus in Mt Aso and Yakushima
- Luggage forwarding between Nagasaki & Aso and Miyazaki & Yakushima
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" The whole package was really well planned and I felt I had a true Japanese adventure."
Janet, October 2008



Beppu offers not just a plethora of *onsen* water baths but sand baths on the beach, mud baths and steam baths – enough for a whole week of bathing. But be sure to find time to visit the safari park and possibly the sex museum in between!





As **Tokyo's** neon glow fades on the horizon, the quiet tranquility and beauty of the mountains, valleys and rice fields of the north await you. It is against this backdrop that A Northern Soul is set.



Exquisite local cuisine, eternally traditional Japanese culture, the pureness of the countryside and the ruggedness of the Japan Sea coastline offer you a unique perspective of Japan. Following two days exploring the huge futuristic 'megapolis' that is Tokyo we'll head to the World Heritage site of **Nikko**, a perfect blend of lakes, mountains, temples (and monkeys!).

From here, it's further north to **Sendai** catching up on local history at the castle and visiting one of the three 'must see' views in Japan – sunset over the **Matsushima** seascape.

The beautiful temples and gardens of Hiraizumi are followed by a soak in the luxurious hot spring waters of **Naruko Onsen**. After cleansing your body, cleanse your soul staying in temple lodgings at the base of **Mt Haguro** where you will get a first-hand experience of the mysticism of Japanese Buddhism at this most holy of mountains.

Japanese Food

Sushi is only the beginning of a massive range of amazing taste sensations that await you as you embark on a culinary adventure through Japan.

The Japanese take their food very seriously and eating is a huge topic of conversation; it is difficult to switch on the TV without at least one presenter proclaiming some morsel of food as *"oishii!"* (delicious!). The different regions of the country each have their own specialties, some more strange than others. It is a brave man who samples the bee larvae (*hachi no ko*) in Matsumoto or the crab brains (kani miso) in Niigata.

If you're looking for a quick meal then a *"ramen"* shop is never far away. Here you will be served huge bowls of steaming noodles and can slurp away with the locals.

If you are looking for something more refined then a *"Kaiseki"* dinner is not to be missed. This style of cooking, originally from Kyoto, is designed to appeal to all of the senses. The food itself is a work of art and the tableware as well as the surroundings are just as impressive as the taste.

It is difficult to get a bad meal in Japan and with restaurants on nearly every corner you will be spoilt for choice.

Something to try!

Sushi Vinegared rice with fish or vegetables

Sashimi Raw fish served with wasabi (horseradish) and soy sauce

Tempura Lightly battered deep fried vegetables or fish

Okonomiyaki Japanese style pancake

Yakitori Grilled chicken on sticks

Kushi-age Deep fried fish, vegetables or meat on sticks

Yakiniku Cook it yourself Korean BBQ

Shabu Shabu Very thin slices of beef cooked in a stew pot on your table

Ramen Chinese style noodles in a bowl of soup often served with pork

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 10 evening meals
- Tokyo transport pass
- 4 Day Flexi Japan Rail Pass
- Nikko local transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Touring on Sado Island
- Luggage forwarding between Naruko Onsen & Niigata and Niigata & Tokyo
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

" Food that was included at the accommodation was extremely good quality and [it was] great to experience the traditional Japanese way of eating."
Gemma, October 2008



Come and join your **Tour Leader**, wildlife expert and Japan enthusiast Oscar Huygens, for an exciting adventure mixing the very best of Japanese culture in the vibrant cities of Tokyo and Kyoto, with 5 days amongst nature hiking in the stunning **Japanese Alps**.

We alternate with visits to **Tokyo** and **Kyoto**, Japan's most famous cities, with one to three day hikes in the beautiful mountains of Central Japan and a stay in **Matsumoto**, the gateway to the Japanese Alps, and home to one of

Japan's best preserved *Samurai* castles. In the stunning Kiso Valley region we hike the old Nakasendo highway which functioned as a postal route during the Edo period. This path winds between the well maintained post towns of Nagiso and Tsumago through fields, rice paddies and past local houses.

This amazing day is topped off with a night in the quaint town of Magome with a stay in a traditional Japanese inn with a *ryori* style fireplace.

The group for this tour is limited to **just 8 people** allowing you to see Japanese nature up close and to share Oscar's expertise and knowledge.

The tour combines mountain hikes with visits to places of cultural interest and if you are lucky you may see monkeys, serows and of course wild bears! An exciting mix of history, architecture, contemporary culture, and of course nature.

Bears in Japan

People don't often associate Japan with bears. Historically, Asiatic black bears occupied all of Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshu, while brown bears have occupied all of Hokkaido. Their ranges have been much reduced over the centuries and the black bears became extinct in Kyushu in the 1950s, and are restricted to very small pockets of Shikoku. However, probably in excess of 15,000 remain in Honshu, even though some isolated populations are endangered. In Hokkaido, brown bears are now confined to the mountainous areas, but between 1000 and 2000 still remain there.

Oscar C. Huygens is one of the 3 co-founders of the Shinshu Tsukinowaguma Kenkyu Kai (the Shinshu Asiatic Black Bear Study Group), and the first person in Japan to obtain a Ph.D. studying Asiatic black bears. The group, now a registered NPO, has been very active in Nagano Prefecture since 1995. The non-lethal control methods they developed have probably saved the lives of hundreds of bears, while their scientific research program has led to the publication of over 15 peer-reviewed papers in international scientific journals.



Accommodation will be a mix of Western style (mostly in the cities) and traditional, with futons laid out in beautiful Japanese tatami rooms. You will also have the option of a "homestay" with a Japanese family in Matsumoto (subject to availability). The food will be exquisite, and the pace and variety of experiences will be such that you will truly feel like your Japanese experience could not have been more complete!

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 9 dinners/lunches
- Tokyo transport pass
- Luggage forwarding between Matsumoto & Kyoto
- Kyoto 2 day bus pass
- Entrance to Matsumoto castle
- Entrance to selected Kyoto temples and gardens
- Full time services of your Tour Leader, Oscar Huygens
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

"Oscar was excellent in all ways. His knowledge of the flora, fauna and administration of natural areas in Japan was especially appreciated."
Timothy & Janet, October 2009



Winter Highlights is your chance to see a unique country in a very different light; to combine the urban hustle and bustle of modern **Tokyo** with bird watching and ocean ice-breaking in the snowy wilderness of **Hokkaido**; to explore the beautiful temples and shrines of **Kyoto**, free from the crowds of high season, before reaching the small village of **Yudanaka**, deep in the mountains of **Nagano** and home not only to skiers and hot spring aficionados but also to the famous Japanese 'snow monkeys'.

The clear skies of winter also provide stunning views (you might even catch a glimpse of the soaring Mt. Fuji from one of Tokyo's skyscrapers) and fantastic opportunities for photography. In the far north, the island of Hokkaido is a winter paradise: the glistening ice sculptures of **Sapporo's** Snow Festival turn central park into a magical winter wonderland. For nature lovers, we take you out in to Hokkaido's wide snow-covered plains and across serene lakes, offering up glimpses of rare birds including the red-crowned crane and Steller's sea eagle.

Winter in Japan

Winter is a fantastic time to visit Japan – the highlight temples and gardens are refreshingly crowd-free, the skies often clear and snowfall makes for some beautiful panoramas. It is also festival season with bright, energetic displays and plenty of local “fire-water” warming up the colder areas of the country.

But perhaps Japan’s biggest winter draw is its spectacular wildlife. On the northern island of Hokkaido, red-crowned cranes dance amongst the marsh reeds while Stellar’s sea eagles patrol the rocky peninsulas. On land meanwhile, herds of Sika deer and red fox roam the rugged landscape.

To get really up and close to nature, a ride on an ice-breaker through the barely navigable waters of the Sea of Okhotsk promises an exhilarating experience. Further south, hooded cranes flock to the large open plains in their thousands, whilst the incredibly photographic Japanese snow monkeys escape the cold by bathing in natural hot springs.

Combine this with spectacular ice festivals, great food and of course, the renowned hospitality of the Japanese and we are sure you’ll warm to Japan’s wintertime atmosphere.

What’s Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals
- Tokyo transport pass
- Sumida River boat cruise
- Guided walking tour of the Gion *geisha* district in Kyoto
- Ice Breaking cruise in Rausu
- Luggage forwarding between Sapporo & Tsurui and Kyoto & Tokyo
- Full time services of your Tour Leader
- InsideJapan Tours’ complimentary Info-Pack



With temperatures well below zero the perfect way to end your day will be a long soak in the outdoor hot spring baths followed by a large pot of steaming *nabe* stew before tucking up under a *kotatsu* heated table in a traditional Japanese *ryokan* (hotel). A flask of hot *sake* will top it all off!

With so many fantastic experiences, accommodation in good quality, well located business hotels and friendly traditional inns and delicious dinners included at many night stops, Winter Highlights is a truly magical tour for a truly magical time of year!

“ *Not just a wildlife wilderness spectacular but so much else as well.*”

Bryan, February 2008

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When contacting us please remember to include the following information:

- The name and date of the tour you would like to join
- The names of everyone who would be coming on the tour
- Your full postal address (including post / zip code and country) and a contact telephone number

We will also need your flight details once you have them. We can however take this information at a later date if you wish to wait before booking your flights

We are sure that you will have a few questions before deciding to book a tour so please do not hesitate to ask. We are here to assist you in whatever way we can and will do our best to answer all your queries quickly and efficiently.

Once we have received your booking request we will then send you in the mail a copy of your invoice, our terms and conditions and a simple booking form.



Payment Schedule

We ask for a non-refundable deposit to secure your place on the tour with the balance to be paid in full no later than two months prior to your arrival in Japan.

If we receive your booking less than two months prior to the tour start date we ask for payment to be made in full once you have received your invoice.

We accept payment by credit or debit card, by personal cheque or via electronic bank transfer. We accept credit card payments in five currencies: Pounds Sterling (GBP); US Dollars (USD); Canadian Dollars (CAD); Australian Dollars (AUD); and Euros (EUR). The fee for processing credit card payments is included in the price of your package so there are no extra credit card fees.



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