



InsideJapan Tours is an independent company created to bring Japan to anybody who wants to see first hand this unique country. Our flexible, value for money small group tours will bring you the classic sights and much, much more besides....



Join us and discover Japan.

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“ Thanks for the best vacation we’ve ever had! ”

Brian & Brooke Henry



SMALL GROUP TOURS

SPRING 2008 - SPRING 2009

歓迎 japan
get beneath the surface

www.insidejapantours.com

“ this is an ideal way of seeing the country and would definitely be a reason for travelling with you again. ”

Steve and Kate Tilbury



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

This year we continue to strike out even further afield into Japan's more remote and infrequently visited regions. **Kyushu Elements** will bring you the volcanic landscapes of the western regions, whereas **Japan Sea Coast** explores the beautiful western seaboard. Finally our **Winter Highlights** tour combines the best of this magical season, with skiing, hot spring baths and the famous onsen monkeys!

Small Group Tours 2008 / 09

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Japan is made up of four islands, Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku as well as the southern most 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 why not reach out further with our **Kyushu Elements** and **Land of the Rising Sun** tours. Both trips visit 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. From 2008 we are offering our **Winter Highlights** tour, a unique chance to experience the beauty of Hokkaido in winter and either get a few days in on the slopes of the Furano ski resort or explore the snowy wilds of the Shiretoko nature reserve!

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. All our staff have extensive experience of living and working in Japan, speak Japanese and spend up to 12 weeks a year in Japan leading our small group tours.

Our speciality knowledge covers the length and breadth of the country so whether it's the expansive wilderness of Hokkaido, the volcanic landscapes of Kyushu or the electric cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya that interest you, we'll have someone with the expertise to assist.

We will provide you with top level customer service both before your departure and throughout your stay in Japan and if you have any special requests, please do not hesitate to ask.

As a Japan-only specialist with offices in the UK and Nagoya, Japan we are in a unique position to provide all our customers with first class customer care coupled with a huge range of services and options on the ground in Japan. Just get in touch and take your first step towards making your Japan dreams a reality.

We can be contacted by phone on UK + 44 (0)870 120 5600 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 your holiday plans in person.

Be sure to visit our web-site – www.insidejapantours.com. Here you will find the full details on all our tours and services including full day by day itineraries as well as lots of information about Japan and Japanese culture.





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.

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 Buddy' (leader) will accompany the group throughout, staying in the same accommodation

and travelling with you from destination to destination. Your Tour Buddy 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 Buddy is there to make sure that you get the absolute most out of your time in Japan.

Single Supplements

For most of our tours single travellers are NOT charged a single supplement** and will be guaranteed a single room in Western style accommodation. However, please be aware that in Japanese style ryokan and minshuku, single rooms are not always available and you may be asked to share with a fellow traveller of the same sex.

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.

Getting Around

Japan has an extremely efficient public transport system and we will be taking full advantage of this whilst on tour. Journeys will be made using public trains and buses and all our tours include at least two journeys on the world famous *Shinkansen*, better known in the west as the 'Bullet Train'.

Luggage

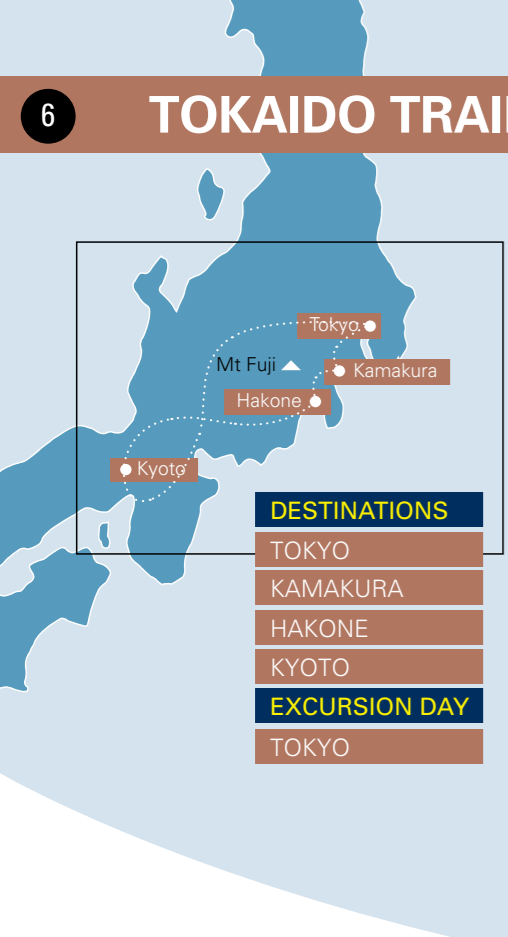
Journeying by public transport does of course mean that it is best to travel light as you will be carrying your own bags. Light, compact rucksacks or suitcases are ideal.

As standard on all tours

- All transport between destinations
- Good quality tried and tested accommodation
- Airport meet and greet and return airport transfer
- Breakfast everyday and a number of evenings meals***
- Your own Tour Buddy to point you in the right direction of the best gardens, events, galleries, shopping, hikes and of course *Karaoke!*
- Your complimentary Info-Pack full of top sightseeing ideas and Japan travel tips

* A Japanese Tour Leader accompanies the Japan Enchantment tour
 ** A single supplement is payable on the Land of the Rising Sun tour (£340 / US\$714). However, customers who are happy to share a room can choose not to pay the supplement. Customers who pay the supplement will be guaranteed a single room at all night stops other than Miyajima and Miyaji.
 *** Land of the Rising Sun does NOT include breakfast everyday





- DESTINATIONS**
- TOKYO
 - KAMAKURA
 - HAKONE
 - KYOTO
- EXCURSION DAY**
- TOKYO



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 businessmen, 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 "bashi" 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 our July and November Tokaido Trail tours give you the chance to check out the action in Nagoya and Fukuoka respectively. You can also catch the sumo on our September Essential Honshu. Your Tour Buddy 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.

- Start Dates 2008/09**
- Tue 8th Apr 08 – SOLD OUT
 - Sun 13th July 08
 - Sun 2nd Nov 08
 - Thu 16th Apr 09
- Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)**
9 nights: £950 / US\$1995 (excluding international flights)

- What's Included**
- 9 nights accommodation
 - All transport between destinations
 - Tokyo transport pass
 - Airport meet and greet
 - 7 day Japan Rail Pass
 - Luggage forwarding between Kamakura and Kyoto
 - Breakfast everyday
 - 3 evening meals
 - Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo
 - Walking tour of the Gion Geisha district in Kyoto

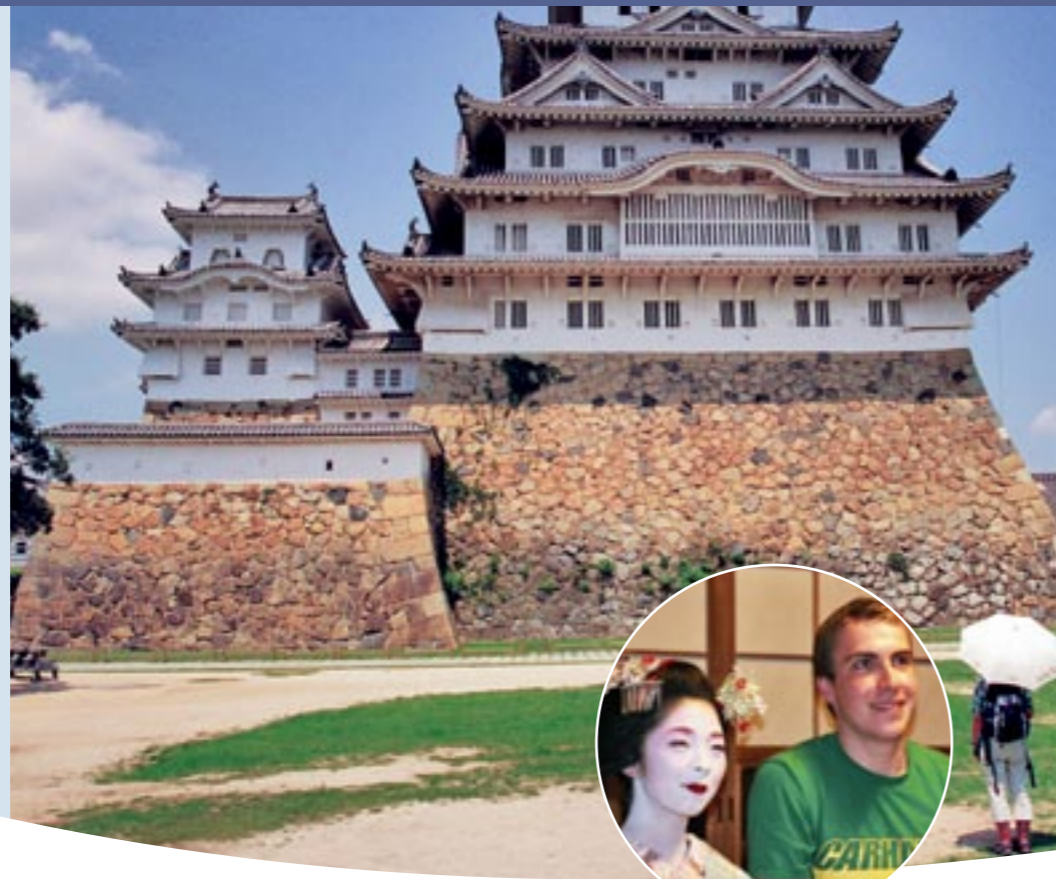
- Extra nights - prices per person per night**
- Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour: £40 / US\$84
 - Tokyo Hotel post tour: £55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)
 - Anytime check-in on first day: £40 / US\$84
 - 1pm check-in on first day: £25 / US\$53





Japan has a myriad of sights to see and experiences to be had and the Essential Honshu brings you a whole hatful in two packed weeks. Through the hot steamy days of summer and the warm nights of autumn 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 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 Buddy 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.



A thrilling chance encounter with a *Geisha* in historic **Kyoto** scurrying to her evening appointments contrasted with a visit to the faddy fashion capital of **Osaka** sums up the unique eccentricities of this, 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 Japan at its urban and rural extremes.

Our July departures bring the opportunity to climb to the summit of **Mt. Fuji**, Japan's most sacred mountain and a symbol of a nation. We'll be staying 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!

Start Dates 2008 (2009 TBC)

Sun 27th Jul 08
Tue 31st Jul 08
Sun 17th Aug 08
Sun 7th Sep 08

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

14 nights: £1300 / US\$2730
(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Luggage forwarding from Kamakura to Osaka
- Breakfast everyday
- 7 evening meals
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo
- Walking tour of the Gion Geisha district in Kyoto

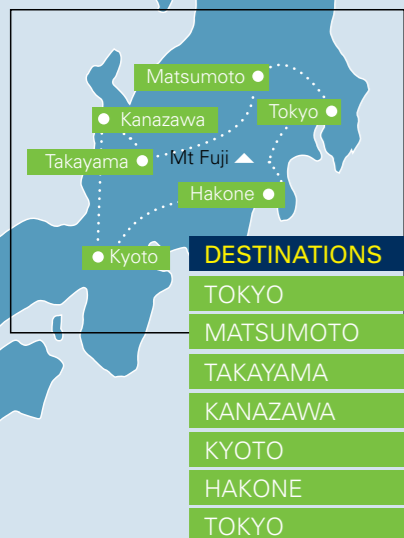
Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel pre-tour: £40 / US\$84

Tokyo Hotel post-tour (twin share)
£55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)

Anytime check-in on first day: £40 / US\$84

1pm check-in on first day: £25 / US\$53



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* is 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.

New for 2008, the included 7 day Japan Rail Pass will enable you 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 5 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 *karaokel*) 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 classes.

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

We have eight tour departures running in April - Spring Elegance, Japan Enchantment, Tokaido Trail, Land of the Rising Sun and Hidden Japan - during which, as long as the weather cooperates, you will be able to experience the beauty of the *sakura* blossoms and the fun of '*Hanami*'.

Start Dates 2008/09

Wed 26th Mar 08

Sat 5th Apr 08 – SOLD OUT

Sat 12th Apr 08 – SOLD OUT

Mon 23rd Mar 09

Sun 5th Apr 09

Thu 9th Apr 09

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

13 nights: £1475 / US\$3098

(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- 7 day Japan Rail Pass
- Luggage forwarding from Kyoto to Tokyo
- Breakfast everyday
- 5 evening meals
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo
- Walking tour of the Gion Geisha district in Kyoto

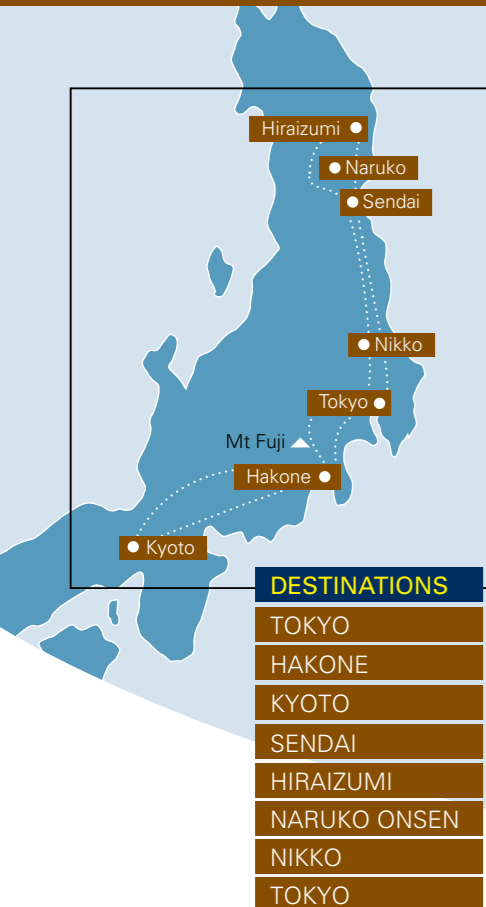
Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour:

£50 / US\$105 (incl. b/fast)

Tokyo Hotel post tour

£75 / US\$158 (incl. b/fast)



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Japan is a nation of contrasts. On the Enchantment tour you'll experience everything 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 long gone time 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 splendid 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 we'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; an all together 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 seafront where freshly caught oysters are cooked over charcoal grills; soak in the

revitalising 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 9 delicious evening meals included, hotels in the best locations and your expert tour leader Ota-san to show you the sights, Japan Enchantment is a tour to savour.

Miyako Odori

Every April, 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. Each *Geisha* district has its own dances but in Gion, the most famous of these, the setting is Gion Kobu Kaburenjo Theatre, familiar to those who have read "Memoirs of a Geisha" as the theatre where Saori made her debut and danced for the Chairman.

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 part of the Japan Enchantment (Spring departure - included in the price) and as an optional extra on our Spring Elegance tours and April's Tokaido Trail and Hidden Japan departures.



Start Dates 2008/09

Sun 30th Mar 08

Sun 19th Oct 08

Sat 28th March 09

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

16 nights: £2200 / US\$4620
(excluding international flights)

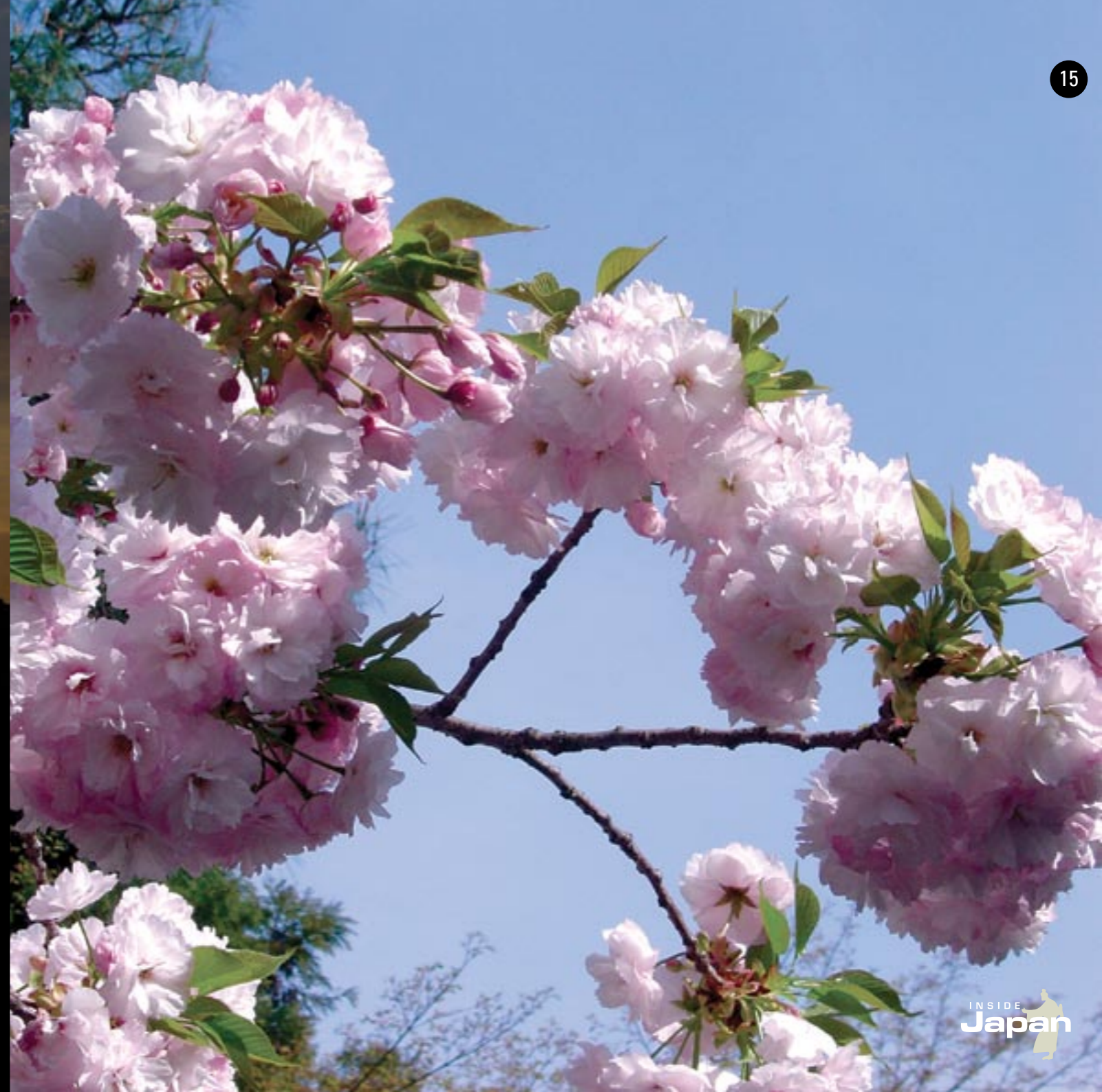
What's Included

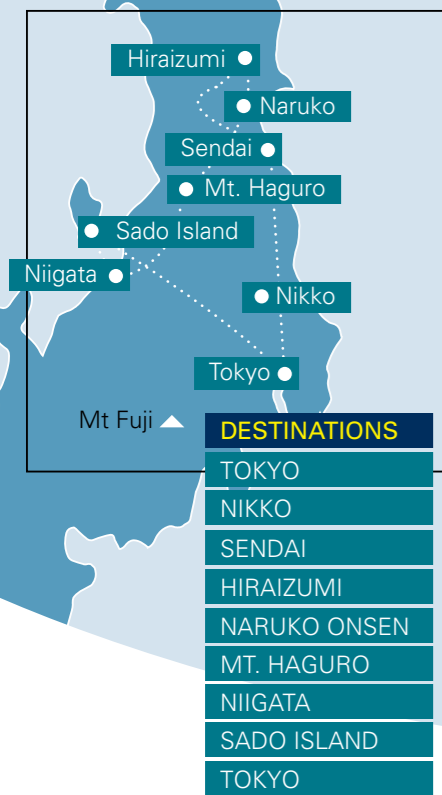
- 16 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Airport transfers
- 14 day Japan Rail Pass
- Breakfast everyday
- 9 evening meals
- *Geisha* district evening walking tour in Kyoto and admission to 'Miyako Odori' *Geisha* Dances
- Expert Japanese tour leader

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel pre-tour: £75/US\$158
(incl. b/fast)

Tokyo Hotel post-tour: £40 / US\$84
(incl. b/fast)





With the heat of summer just a fading memory, autumn brings with it an explosion of reds, golds and browns, the mountainsides ablaze with the changing leaves. It is against this backdrop that our Northern Soul tour for 2008 is set.



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. 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 'megalopolis' 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 or 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.

Our next stops take us to Niigata City, renowned for its fantastic crab dishes and the purity of its sake, and on to the fascinating and remote **Sado Island**. Formerly a place of harsh exile for poets, priests and feudal lords and dreams of riches for the gold prospectors of the 17th century, Sado has a culture unique in Japan and provides a fitting climax to this voyage of discovery.

With its blend of city bustle and traditional rural tranquillity, combined with mouthwatering dinners at every stop, this tour offers a uniquely enthralling yet relaxing trip.

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 specialities, 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 spoiled 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

Start Dates 2008 (2009 TBC)

Fri 17th Oct 08

Fri 24th Oct 08

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

14 nights: £1550 / US\$3255 (excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Luggage forwarding from Naruko to Niigata and Niigata to Tokyo
- Touring by private minibus on Sado Island
- Breakfast everyday (light breakfast in Niigata)
- 10 evening meals
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour: £40 / US\$84

Tokyo Hotel Post tour: £55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)

Anytime check-in on first day: £40 / US\$84

1pm check-in on first day: £25 / US\$53 per room



DESTINATIONS

TOKYO

HIMEJI

MIYAJIMA

MATSUYAMA

KOTOHIRA

TOKUSHIMA

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 April and the fiery reds and oranges of the autumn leaves in October, 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.

You will venture on through the precincts of **Himeji Castle** and mountain top temples of *Shosha-san* with the chants of monks and the striking bells echoing

amidst the towering cedars; soak away your cares at Japan's oldest hot spring baths in **Matsuyama**; in **Kotohira** make the pilgrimage to the top of *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, **Tokushima** where we will see a performance of Japan's famous puppet theatre, *bunraku*, and *awa-odori* dance, the Hidden Japan tour takes you from the present to show you a glimpse of the past: An 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. Himeji Castle is widely regarded as the most impressive due to its size and Matsuyama commands great views of the area as well as boasting an original moat.



Start Dates 2008/09

Mon 31st Mar 08 - SOLD OUT

Mon 6th Oct 08 - SOLD OUT

Mon 3rd Nov 08

Thu 26th March 09

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

14 nights: £1575 / US\$3308

(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Breakfast everyday
- 1 lunch
- 7 evening meals
- Full day touring in Kotohira region
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour:
£50 / US\$105 (incl. b/fast)Kyoto Hotel Post tour:
£40 / US\$84 (incl. b/fast)



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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 early autumn, 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: Both offering fascinating insights into the artistic

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 bath house 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. With a mix of western hotels, some beautiful traditional inns and fantastic food the Japan Sea Coast is a voyage to remember.

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.

© JNTO

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.

Start Dates 2008 (2009 TBC)
Sat 4th Oct 08

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)
13 nights: £1400 / US\$2940
(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet and greet
- Airport transfers
- Breakfast everyday
- 7 evening meals
- Entrance to Adachi Museum
- Entrance to Matsue Castle

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Kyoto Hotel pre-tour:
£40 / US\$84 (incl. b/fast)

Osaka Hotel post-tour:
£55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)



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. **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!



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 and a fantastic experience of Japan's stunning natural, urban and cultural diversity.

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 off 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

Start Dates 2008 (2009 TBC)
Mon 27th Oct 08

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)
14 Nights: £1400 / US\$2940
(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Breakfast everyday
- 7 evening meals

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour:
£55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)

Tokyo Hotel Post tour:
£55 / US\$116 (incl. b/fast)





DESTINATIONS

KYOTO

MIYAJIMA

BEPPU

MIYAJI/MT. ASO

NAGASAKI

TOKYO



© Phil Colley

From **Kyoto**, Japan's ancient Imperial capital to the historic trading port of **Nagasaki** on the western tip of Kyushu Island, Land of the Rising Sun is an odyssey through a country of mystery. Famous throughout the world for its clash of ancient customs and technology driven, twenty-first century culture, this tour will introduce you to some of the many contrasts and contradictions that make Japan such a fascinating and addictive holiday destination.

The Kansai region is considered to be the birthplace of Japanese civilization and this tour commences in its heartland, Kyoto. On the surface a bustling modern city, **Kyoto** offers up a world of mystery and surprise; ancient temples lie hidden down anonymous backstreets; half-open sliding wooden doors offer an enticing glimpse of shaded gardens and exclusive tea-houses; ghost-like *Geisha* slide gracefully through the half-lit streets of Gion. A perfect introduction before we head west to see a very different Japan.

Mountains and monkeys; 'hells' and hot springs; steaming volcanoes and *Samurai* castles; we will encounter them all as we stop at **Miyajima Island** renowned for its 'floating' *torii* gate at Itsukushima shrine, then in the playful resort town of **Beppu** before moving on to **Mt. Aso** with its huge caldera and clouds of sulfurous gas. A brief stop at **Suizenji Garden in Kumamoto** breaks up the journey to **Nagasaki** where we will see first hand the tiny Dutch enclave which served as the funnel for Western ideas and technology into Japan throughout the hundreds of years of isolation.

All this will serve as the perfect build up to our stay in **Tokyo**. The laid back western regions may be a world away from the hundred miles an hour sensory explosion of the modern capital but Tokyo is the mixing bowl for every element of Japanese culture, thrown together in a huge metropolis; a city of the future but one rooted in ancient traditions; a city where tiny family-run noodle bars sit side by side with the world's biggest corporations. An experience not to be missed!

Land of the Rising Sun has something for everybody: Whether you are fascinated by ancient Buddhism, wish to stroll through the most famous of Japanese gardens, be buried in hot sand, stare into the World's largest volcanic caldera, or see the future in Tokyo's electronic megastores, you will have the chance to do it all. With your expert tour leader Phil Colley on hand at all times to assist you, **Land of the Rising Sun** will be the trip of a lifetime and a wonderful experience for first time and repeat visitors alike.

Nagasaki and the Dutch

Most famous for being the target of the second atomic bomb, Nagasaki is a port town with a distinct cosmopolitan feel and a huge amount of history stretching back well beyond the horrors of WWII. A small fishing village until the 16th Century, Nagasaki quickly flourished as a trading port after a Portuguese ship landed here after being blown off course. After the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British were to follow, each introducing exciting new goods, ideas and inventions.

Trade flourished here until the Shogun, threatened by the Christian evangelising of the Portuguese, decided to banish all foreigners except for a small number of mostly Dutch traders who were permitted to remain on '*Dejima*'. Literally meaning "exit island", this small Dutch enclave was built on reclaimed land jutting out into Nagasaki Bay. This was to be the only point of trade and contact with the Western world for 200 years. Although *Dejima* is no longer an island, the buildings have been reconstructed exactly as they would have been in the 17th Century giving visitors a unique glimpse of the past.

You will be able to visit Nagasaki and *Dejima* as part of the "Land of the Rising Sun" tour with departures in Spring and Autumn 2008 and the Kyushu Elements tour in October.

Start Dates 2008 (2009 TBC)

Fri 21st Mar 08

Fri 4th Apr 08

Fri 24th Oct 08

Prices 2008 (2009 TBC)

13 nights: £1695 / US\$3560

(optional single supplement £340 / US\$714*)

What's Included

- 13 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- 1 Breakfast
- 2 evening meals
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo
- Expert local guide in Kyoto

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Kyoto Hotel Pre-tour (twin share): £60 / US\$126

Kyoto Hotel Pre-tour (single use): £100 / US\$210

Tokyo Hotel Post-tour (twin share): £50 / US\$105

Tokyo Hotel Post-tour (single use): £75 / US\$158

* A single supplement is payable on the Land of the Rising Sun tour. However, customers who are happy to share a room can choose not to pay the supplement. Customers who pay the supplement will be guaranteed a single room at all night stops other than Miyajima and Miyaji.



© JNTO



Winter Highlights is the 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. Winter sports fanatics can look forward to cutting tracks through fresh powder at **Furano**, one of Asia's finest winter resorts before sipping a beer in the igloo bar! For nature lovers,

our nature reserve excursion takes 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.

With temperatures well below zero the perfect way to end your day will be a long soak in the 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). You will never have been snuggler!

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 as well as providing plenty of opportunities to hit the slopes of Japan's world class winter sports resorts. 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 whilst Steller's sea eagles patrol rocky peninsulas. On land meanwhile, herds of Sika deer and red fox roam the rugged landscape.

To get really up close to nature, a ride on an ice breaker through the barely navigable waters of Kushiro promises an exhilarating experience. Further south, hooded cranes flock to the large open plains in their thousands, whilst the incredibly photogenic Japanese Macaque's (snow monkeys) escape the cold by bathing in natural hot spring pools.

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 special wintertime atmosphere.

© reggie.net

Start Dates 2008/09

Sat 2nd Feb 2008

Sun 1st Feb 2009

Price 2008 (2009 TBC)

14 nights: £1500 / US\$3150
(excluding international flights)

What's Included

- 14 nights accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Tokyo transport pass
- Airport meet and greet
- Airport transfers
- Breakfast everyday
- 7 evening meals
- Boat trip along the Sumida River in Tokyo
- Lift Pass in Furano
- Walking tour of the Gion Geisha district in Kyoto

Extra nights - prices per person per night

Tokyo Hotel Pre-tour: £55 / US\$116
(incl. b/fast)

Tokyo Hotel Post-tour: £40 / US\$84
(incl. b/fast)

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!**

You can book your place on one of our tours by telephone, letter, fax or e-mail.

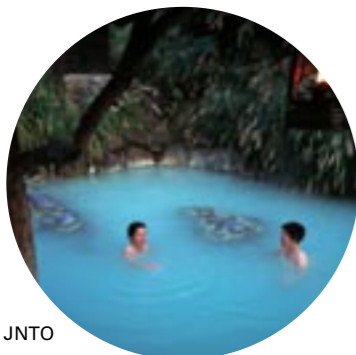
When contacting us please remember to include the following information:

- 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.



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Payment Schedule

We ask for a £200 / \$400 per person 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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