



INSIDE  
**Japan**

Specialists in travel to Japan



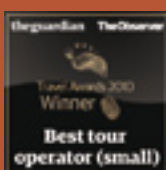
Small Group Tours



Self-Guided Adventures



Fully Tailored Packages



[www.insidejapantours.com](http://www.insidejapantours.com)



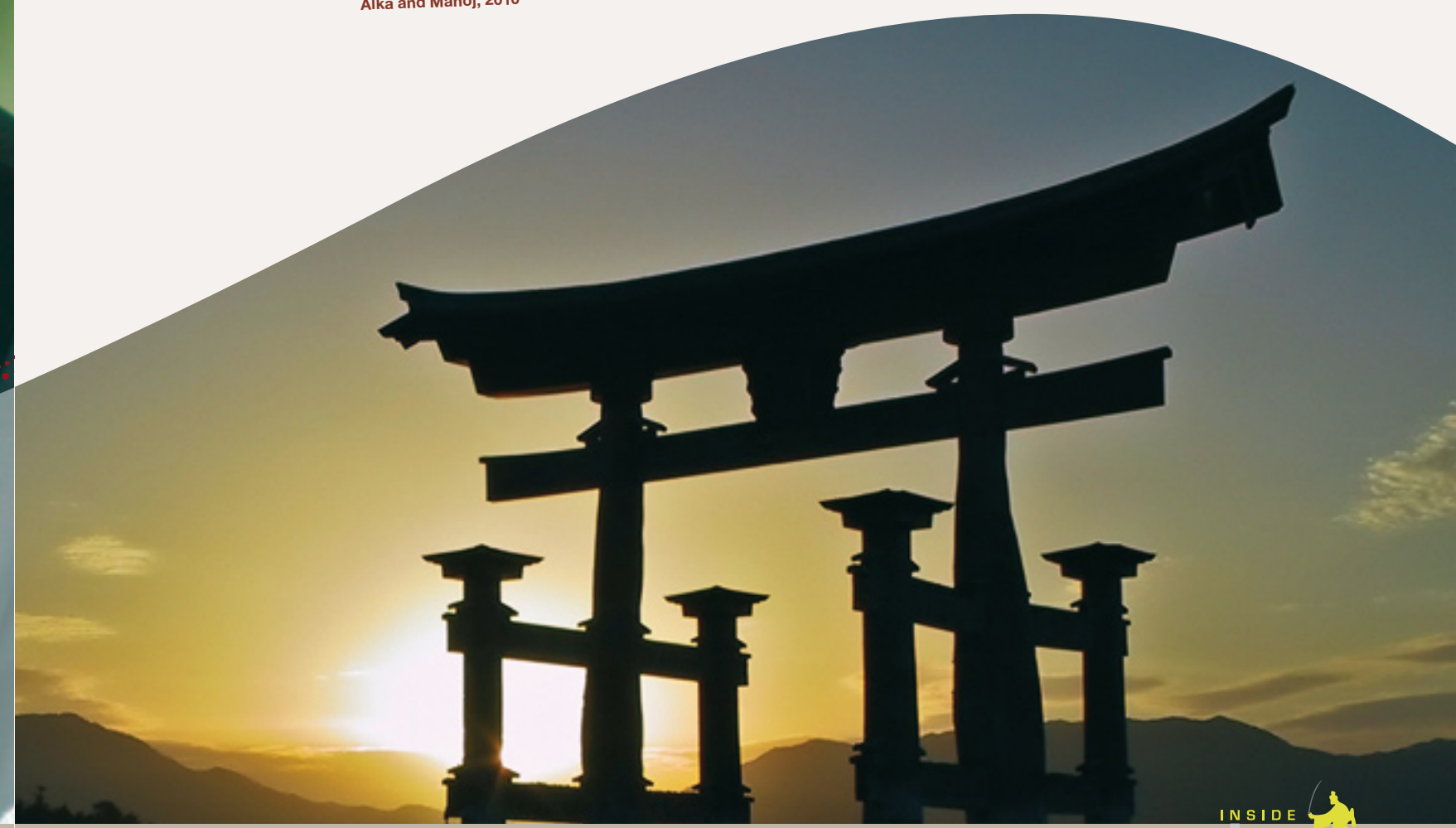
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“We had an absolutely AMAZING, AWESOME FANTASTIC time in Japan, never have we been to a country so hospitable! The experience was just out of this world”

Alka and Manoj, 2010



# About InsideJapan Tours

InsideJapan Tours is a select team of Japan experts dedicated to offering the very best travel experience to our customers. Founded in 2000, we pride ourselves on opening Japan up to anyone who wants to explore this fascinating country, and on creating the perfect travel experience, whatever your interests and whatever your budget.

As Japan-only specialists we focus purely on one country, giving us a greater depth of knowledge and expertise than you will find anywhere else. In the last 10 years we have sent thousands of happy customers on a huge variety of Japan holidays, and are proud of their feedback, which gives testament to the quality of service we offer. Many of our customers have returned for a second visit and a few are on their fourth or fifth, showing the lasting appeal of Japan and the wealth of sights and experiences on offer.

Our brochure is a collection of inspirational itineraries drawn from 10 years of experience and designed to showcase the wonderful diversity of Japan; perhaps the world's most advanced and futuristic society, yet one with a rich and ancient culture. With so much on offer, you can be sure that whatever your likes and interests, Japan will provide you with a myriad of experiences to remember.

Within these pages you will find details of our **Small Group Tours** and our **Self-Guided Adventures**, as well as numerous **experiences and ideas** to create the perfect holiday.

If you are keen to know more about one of our itineraries or our services in general, please get in touch, or take a look at our website where you can find in-depth information on each trip, as well as lots of further information about travelling in Japan.

Whatever style of holiday you choose, we hope that you will enjoy travelling through our brochure as you journey from the wild open expanses of Hokkaido to the hidden gorges and valleys of Shikoku, via Tokyo, the world's largest metropolis and Kyoto, Japan's cultural and historical heart.

All this and much more awaits you. Contact us directly or talk to your local travel agent and make your first steps towards realising your Japan holiday dreams.

## Our Staff

InsideJapan Tours prides itself on our team of dedicated Japan travel experts. Each member of our team has lived and worked in Japan, sharing a passion for the country as well as a commitment to excellent service, quality and attention to detail. Between us we have travelled almost every inch of Japan, allowing you to benefit from our in-depth knowledge and understanding, both of the country itself, but also of what goes into making the best possible travel experience, individually tailored to your preferences. Between us we have climbed Mount Fuji, watched sumo wrestlers train, relaxed in hot-spring baths, sampled the freshest sushi in the world, been scuba diving with manta rays and even run the Tokyo Marathon! We look forward to helping you experience the very best of Japan, whatever your interests.

From your very first phone call or email you can be safe in the knowledge that you are dealing with a Japan expert. We will listen to your needs, answer your questions, provide the very best advice and deliver a holiday that will exceed your expectations.

“I've travelled to the Far East over ten times and InsideJapan had the best documentation I've ever seen. The detail and accuracy of the transport information was stunning. Your ability for me to customise my trip made it memorable... The itinerary and information packs were stupendous”

M. Lanigan, August 2010



### Award winning quality

We are committed to providing top level customer service both before your departure and throughout your stay in Japan. Our quality service and care has been recognised with the **Best Small Tour Operator** award at the Guardian and Observer travel awards 2010 and a silver medal in the British Travel Awards **Small Tour Operator of the Year** category in 2009. We are also proud to be a member of AITO (The Association of Independent Tour Operators); the hallmark of superb holidays from specialist tour operators.

### At home and away

Our service to you does not end when you land in Japan. More than just another agent, InsideJapan Tours has offices in the UK, the US and in Japan. Our Japan office is staffed by English speakers who are just a phone call away and our tour leaders and guides are highly trained and skilled: We will always ensure that your welfare and enjoyment are never left to chance.

### Your Info-Pack

All of our services include a detailed Info-Pack which contains the essential information you need to make your transfers and get to your hotels. Alongside this we provide sightseeing guides and maps, help with language and customs and details of some of our favourite restaurants. The Info-Pack is your personalised travel companion and an essential part of your trip.

### Full financial protection & guaranteed prices

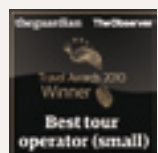
All AITO member companies are fully bonded and governed by an independent dispute settlement service, which means you are in safe hands. Land-only arrangements are bonded with AITO Trust Ltd (1130), while flight-inclusive packages are protected by our ATOL Licence (9419). In the extremely unlikely event of our financial failure your money is safe and secure. All latest prices are available on our website or by contacting us or your local travel agent. We do NOT surcharge; prices are guaranteed once a deposit has been paid.

### How to book

We have offices in the UK and the US and are happy to take bookings through travel agents worldwide. Contact us direct by telephone or email, or book through your local travel agent. We will need to know your full names, address and a contact telephone number and email as well as your intended dates of travel and any dietary requirements that you may have.

### Contact us

☎ UK: 0117 314 4620  
☎ USA: 1 303 952 0184  
@ info@insidejapantours.com



# Introducing Japan

**Japan: The very name conjures images of Mount Fuji, the 'Bullet Train', conveyor belt sushi, sumo, raked gravel gardens, scarlet temples and doll-like geisha. Japan is all these things and much more. Once a country isolated from the West, today Japan's ancient traditions meet the rush of globalisation head-on to create a culture like nowhere else on earth.**

The geography is staggering. Ranging over 3,000 kilometres across more than 6,000 islands, Japan stretches from the northern tip of Hokkaido, where Siberian winds bring heavy snowfall, to the sub-tropical islands of Okinawa in the south. 75 percent of the land is mountainous and includes one tenth of the world's active volcanoes.

Yet this country is an economic powerhouse and home to over 120 million people who have the world's longest life expectancy. They are also some of the friendliest, most welcoming people you will ever meet. And we can't wait to introduce Japan and the Japanese people to you.

All of our holidays, whether you travel on a **Small Group Tour**, follow a **Self-Guided Adventure** or go for a **Fully Tailored Package**, endeavour to take you beneath the surface to discover what makes Japan such an interesting country. You'll explore futuristic cities where millions of people work and play beneath neon-spangled skyscrapers. We'll also show you traditional villages where time has stopped still; rice is still planted by hand, *kimono* still worn with pride and festivals play out exactly as they have for generations.

Often Japan's greatest charm lies in the tiny details: a quirky Hello Kitty! key ring; toilets with enough buttons to rival a small aircraft; an orange-robed monk on a subway train. This country is a photographer's dream. That said, we don't just want you to see Japan, but to touch and feel it as well. We offer the chance to get involved and try your hand at **taiko drumming**, **origami** or **tea ceremony** to name just a few experiences.

Finally, there's the food. Japan boasts surely the most delicate, exquisite and varied of the world's cuisines. From the freshest sushi at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market, to bowls of steaming *udon* slurped at noodle bars with legions of Osaka's *salarymen*, to the refined *kaiseki* banquets in Kyoto; we'll ensure you get the perfect flavour of Japan.

Go on, take a holiday to Japan. The only danger is that this is a country sure to draw you back time and time again.

## Chugoku

More relaxed and laid back than the areas to the east, the Chugoku region of west Japan is a delight to explore. For lovers of art, Kurashiki's fabulous Ohara Museum and Naoshima 'art island' in the Inland Sea offer a wealth of works to enjoy, from Western masters to conceptual pieces by Japanese artists. On the Japan Sea Coast, Matsue boasts the Adachi Museum, an unrivalled collection of Japanese modern art exhibited with the backdrop of a splendid Japanese garden. The most famous city in this region is Hiroshima, where the events surrounding the dropping of the atomic bomb are commemorated at the moving Peace Park and A-Bomb Museum. A short distance from the Hiroshima coast you will find Miyajima, a charming island and one of Japan's most beautiful sights – sunset behind the 'floating' *torii* of Itsukushima Shrine.



## Kyushu

As you head west and cross into Kyushu, the landscapes begin to change. Kyushu is an island of the elements; bubbling, sulphurous waters rise up from the ground, heated by the volcanic lava which lies just below the surface of this living, breathing landmass. In its centre you will find Mount Aso, the world's largest volcanic caldera; to the west, Yakushima, a small island covered with dense rainforest and the inspiration of Miyazaki's animated masterpiece, Princess Mononoke; on the south coast is Nagasaki where for nearly three hundred years the Dutch factory at Dejima functioned as Japan's sole contact point with the West. Kyushu's capital, Fukuoka, is a sleek modern city but best known for the *yatai* food stands serving some of the most delicious *ramen* noodles to be found anywhere in Japan.



## Okinawa

With deserted white sandy beaches framing crystal clear, warm sea waters teeming with tropical fish of all shapes, sizes and colours, the Okinawan islands are an idyllic haven; a place to go and unwind and tune into the slower pace of life that characterises these far flung regions of Japan. The flashing neon and packed commuter trains of Tokyo a surreal image from a very distant world. There are hundreds of islands here, some inhabited, others little more than a rocky outcrop in the ocean. Ishigaki, to the south of the main island is the perfect island break – great beaches, snorkelling, diving, accommodation to suit all budgets and a wide range of day trips. On nearby Taketomi, water buffalo pull carts of farm produce; on Iriomote you can canoe through the mango groves, hike to the top of waterfalls and keep your eyes peeled for a glimpse of the allusive Iriomote Lynx. Okinawa provides an island break to savour.



Ishigaki Island

## Hokkaido

With its rolling hills, wide open spaces, lakes, rivers and nature reserves, Hokkaido is a haven for wildlife and offers spectacular scenery. Whether visiting in the middle of summer for walking and hiking, or the depths of winter to see the breathtaking ice floes and the huge sea eagles which make this rugged landscape their own, Hokkaido offers those who make the journey north a unique experience of Japan. Sapporo, the island's capital, is a cosmopolitan city of two million residents, with a vibrant cultural and economic life and of course, delicious local dishes of the best locally caught seafood, Hokkaido cheeses and the famous *Genghis Khan* lamb barbecue.



## Central Japan

Offering the most diversity of any region, Central Japan stretches west along the Pacific coast as far as Kyoto, and north across the imposing mountains of the Japanese Alps to the Sea of Japan. The industrial power-house of Nagoya forms the economic backbone of the region, Toyota cars rolling off the production lines by the hundreds of thousands. But it is perhaps the bustling market towns such as Takayama, the smaller cities like Matsumoto and Kanazawa, and the awe inspiring peaks of the Alps that truly characterise Central Japan – an area that encapsulates so much of the endless diversity of the country.



## Tohoku

Stretching nearly 700 miles north from Tokyo, the Tohoku region offers visitors a very different experience to the hustle and bustle of the Tokaido seaboard; this is an area in which to lose yourself in the romance of a rural Japan where samurai once fought to win control of the nation for their warlord masters. Tiny *onsen* towns such as Naruko and Nyuto are liberally scattered throughout Tohoku, offering revitalization for the body, whilst the sacred mountains of Dewa Sanzen allow visitors to connect with the quiet spirituality and mysticism of the Japanese spirit.

## Kanto

With the Tokyo metropolis at its heart, the Kanto region is in turn an urban phenomenon of striking modernity, whilst at the same time offering rural retreats, soaring mountains, rugged coastlines and sandy beaches. The Tokyo Metropolitan area is a mega-city, home to some 35 million people and the driving force of Japan's economy and rapidly shifting cultural trends. However, less than 90 minutes away you will find Mount Takao, a peaceful retreat for walking and quiet reflection with spectacular views of the distant urban landscapes. To the south east in Chiba prefecture, lie hidden beaches whilst to the north in Nikko you will discover the spectacularly ornate temples and shrines of Toshogu, the resting place of the first Tokugawa Shogun; the man who began the transformation of Tokyo into the city you will find today.

## Kansai

No two cities could sum up the contrast of urban Japan better than the two giants of the Kansai region – Osaka and Kyoto. Reduced to little more than rubble at the end of World War Two, Osaka has risen again to be one of the world's economic wonders, with a staggering output emanating from this concrete jungle of factories, shops, apartments, flashing lights and catchy jingles. True to its mercantile history, Osaka to this day maintains its rivalry with Kyoto, capital for over 1,000 years, former home of the Emperor and his household and the spiritual and cultural heart of the nation. Kyoto constantly surprises; the 17 Unesco World Heritage sites are just the beginning of what Kyoto offers - truly a must-see destination. In addition to these major cities, Kansai has the beautiful rural pilgrimage trail of the Kumano Kodo, Nara, the birth place of Japanese Buddhism, the *onsen* hot springs of Kinokuni and much more besides.

## Shikoku

The smallest and least populated of the four major islands, Shikoku is a glimpse of Japan before the Meiji restoration ushered in the industrial age at the end of the nineteenth century. Much of the inland area is impenetrable; steep-sided, densely forested mountains soar skywards, their bases disappearing into bottomless ravines, whilst white-water rivers twist and turn along the valley floor. Amidst the mountains you will find hamlets of old farm houses, vine bridges and ancient temples. The Pacific coast offers opportunities for whale watching and diving, whilst on the coast of the Inland Sea you will find the castle city of Matsuyama, home to Japan's oldest bath house, Dogo Onsen. Linking this formerly isolated island to the mainland is the Shimanami Kaido, an extraordinary construction of interconnected bridges which offer an ideal route for cycling enthusiasts.

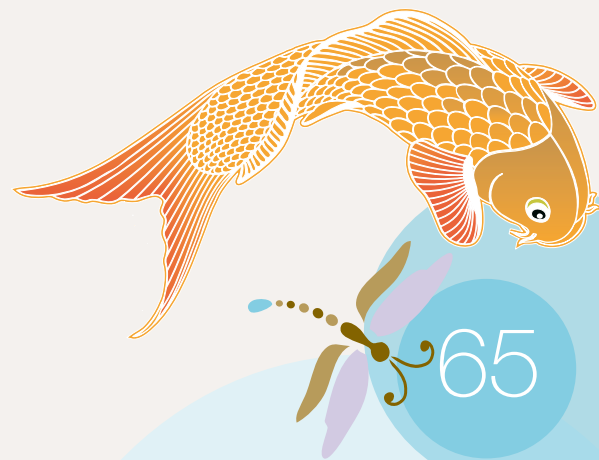


# Choose your holiday

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## Small Group Tours

With a relaxed and friendly style, our accompanied tours are perfect for anyone who enjoys travelling in a small group and would like the added benefit of an expert tour leader on hand throughout your trip to introduce you to the very best sights, sounds, tastes and experiences that Japan has to offer.



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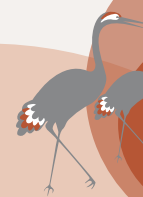
## Fully Tailored Packages

Whether it is the ancient art of sword making, the high-tech Toyota production lines, or remote mountain spas that interest you, our expert team of travel consultants can help by designing an itinerary just for you. Our brochure showcases just a few of the options and experiences available; a little something to whet your appetite for planning the perfect trip.

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## Self-Guided Adventures

Japan is a wonderful place to explore independently; some of the friendliest, most helpful people you will meet anywhere, world-class transport infrastructure, fabulous restaurants from budget eateries to Michelin starred refinement and a myriad of discoveries to be had round every corner. Our tried and tested Self-Guided itineraries take all the logistical worries from your shoulders, allowing you to get the most from every minute of your trip.

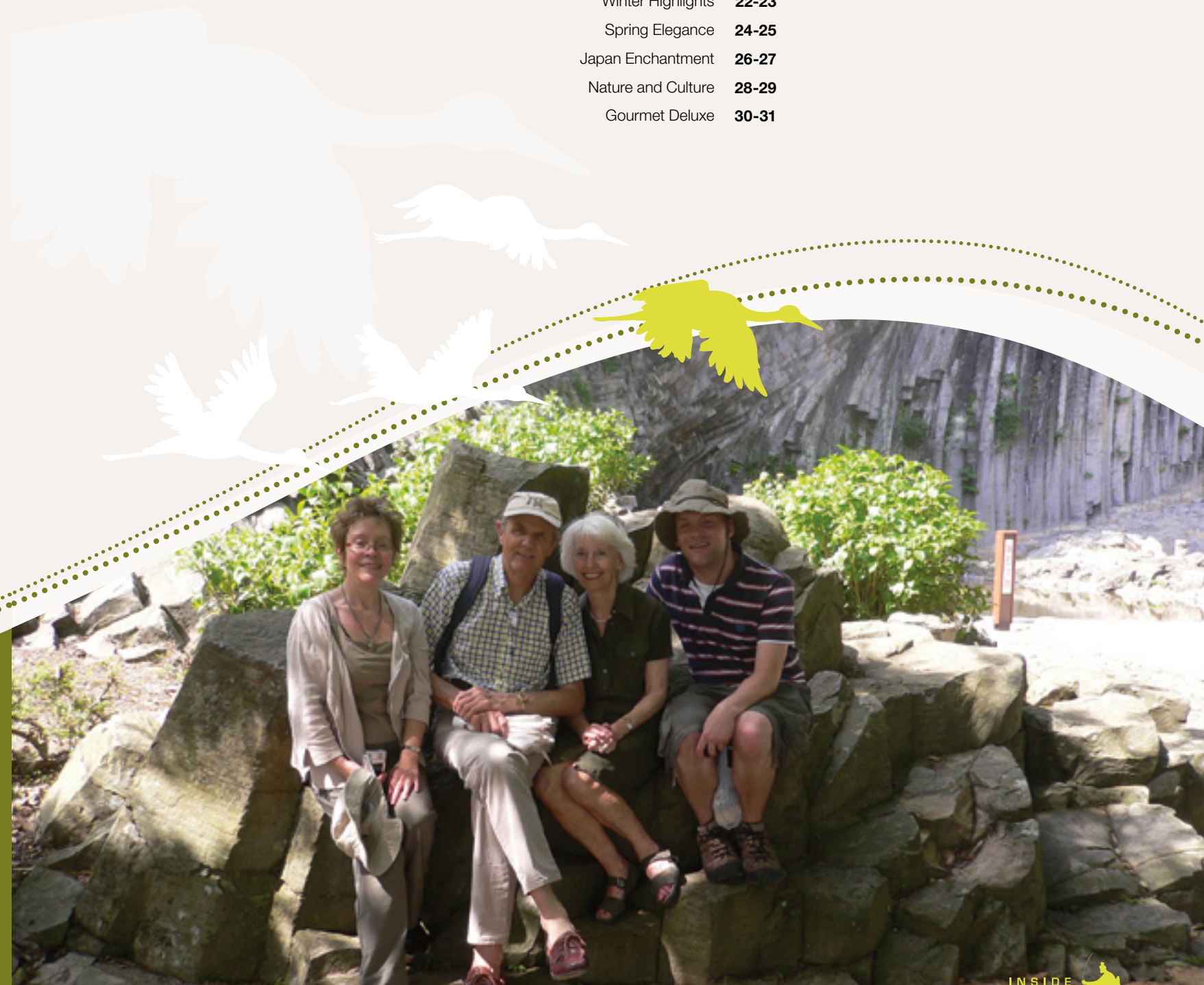


# Small Group Tours

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# Our tour concept

Travelling through Japan in a small group is a fantastic way to see the country while learning about its history and culture, meeting fellow travellers and indulging in some fantastic meals.

Our award winning Small Group Tours have a maximum group size of just 14 people and are led by expert, enthusiastic tour leaders. Our tours are very flexible, enabling you to see and do everything you want. Each day you can decide to stay with the tour group or head off and explore independently; the choice is yours.

When booking on a small group tour you can be assured that we have made every effort to ensure you experience the best of Japan in the time available. Whether it be a first time visit or a second or third repeat visit to Japan, we are sure that you will enjoy the group tour experience.

From the great value Japan Unmasked and Tokaido Trail tours, to our upgraded Spring Elegance, Japan Enchantment and the refined Gourmet Deluxe, we have created itineraries to suit every budget and interest. Whichever tour you choose, all the essentials are included such as your transport between destinations and breakfast every day as well as a number of evening meals.

On tour we travel mainly by train, as the Japanese do, allowing you to get beneath the surface of the country and interact with its people and culture. Where judicious we combine this with the occasional private bus journey, to make the itineraries run as smoothly as the *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' for which Japan is famed

## Prices and booking

To ensure that you never have out of date information, we do not include any prices, departure dates or availability information in the brochure. For the latest details contact us or your local travel agent or check our website. We have many repeat travellers and tours sell out fast, so be sure to plan your trip well in advance.

“This was one of the best holidays we have had in years because we had the freedom and flexibility to do what we wanted either with the group or on our own.”

C. Cott, 2009



## Your tour leader

Your tour leader will accompany the group throughout, stay in the same accommodation and travel with you from destination to destination. Your tour leader is not a professional guide, but rather a Japanese speaker who has experience living and working in Japan and will be able to give personal insights into Japanese culture and society. Your tour leader is there to make sure that you get the absolute most from your holiday. Our small team of tour leaders are passionate about Japan and by the end of the tour you will be too!

## Accommodation

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

## Meals

One thing we're sure you'll look forward to is the best local cuisine. All our tours include breakfast every day as well as at least one evening meal (most tours have four or more). At InsideJapan we love Japanese food and strive to include Japan's amazing range of culinary styles on our tours. Your tour leader will of course give their personal recommendations for the best sushi or extra delicious *yakitori* chicken skewers. Given the vast array of culinary delights on offer, we want you to enjoy all the meals provided on tour, therefore if you have any specific dietary requirements please let us know in advance and we will do our best to ensure that we cater for your needs.

## Single supplements

Spring Elegance, Japan Enchantment and Gourmet Deluxe carry a mandatory single supplement. This guarantees a single room on all but two nights for Spring Elegance and at every stop for Japan Enchantment and Gourmet Deluxe. Please see our website for full details.

For our other tours we do NOT charge a single supplement for solo travellers and with the exception of Japan Unmasked, solo travellers are given a single room at all of the Western-style accommodation for no extra charge. In Japanese-style *ryokan* and *minshuku*, single rooms are not usually available and solo travellers will be asked to share with a fellow traveller of the same sex.

On Japan Unmasked single rooms are only guaranteed at the first hotel in Tokyo and the last hotel in Yokohama. All other nights are on a sharing basis.

## Luggage

Travelling by public transport does of course mean that it is best to travel light as you must carry your own bags. Moderately sized suitcases with wheels are ideal. All our tours include some next day delivery luggage forwarding, so taking an overnight bag is recommended. The luggage forwarding service in Japan, known as *takuhaibin*, is extremely reliable and efficient, allowing you to travel light and in comfort, especially in the more rural areas.

## International flights

International flights are not included in our tour prices, giving you the freedom to source your own flights. However, we are more than happy to arrange flights for UK clients 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 if you would like to explore Japan further. Please let us know if this would interest you.

## As standard on 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 & greet and return airport transfers (except for Japan Unmasked)

Breakfast every day

At least 1 evening meal (most tours have 4 or more)

Maximum group size of 14

Full time expert tour leader

Info-Pack full of sightseeing ideas and cultural tips

For detailed day-by-day itineraries and full pricing see [www.insidejapantours.com](http://www.insidejapantours.com)

# Japan Unmasked

## 13 nights

TOKYO (2) – NAGANO (1) – MATSUMOTO (1) – TAKAYAMA (2) – KANAZAWA (1) – HIROSHIMA (2) – KURASHIKI (1) – KYOTO (2) – YOKOHAMA (1)

On our Japan Unmasked tour we unveil Japan as one of the most exotic, exciting and intriguing destinations in the world. Your expert tour leader will not only take you to some of the best places Japan has to offer but will show you a side of the country that rarely makes it into the guidebooks.

The journey starts in Tokyo among neon lights and costumed teenagers, before heading to the mountains; a peek at a world that few foreigners ever see. In wintertime, in the heart of rural Nagano, the famous snow monkeys come out to play and we'll also make a stop at 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'. Also in Kanazawa, we'll soak up the classic beauty of Kenrokuen, touted as one of the three best gardens in the country.

Travelling by *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' and streetcar, next stop is historic Hiroshima where we visit the moving A-Bomb Museum. A day trip by ferry across the bay brings us to the floating *torii* gate of sacred Miyajima Island. In Kurashiki meanwhile, an optional bike ride through the countryside will take you past pagodas and rice paddies.

Japan Unmasked also takes in Kyoto, the epicentre of Japanese history and culture. Round every corner lie hidden oases of tranquil calm. We'll venture to the more traditional districts to discover what hides behind those sliding doors.

We will experience Japanese-style stays in Takayama at a family-run *minshuku* and in Nagano we'll stay in a *shukubo*, sharing lodgings with other pilgrims at Zenko-ji Buddhist temple.

Japan Unmasked is our most affordable tour, allowing you to spend as much or as little as you like on eating, shopping and sightseeing. With departures throughout the year, this flexible trip caters to everyone's travel needs.



“Brilliant tour which I will be recommending to everyone I know!”

M. Johnson, 2010



### What's included

- 13 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 14 day Japan Rail Pass
- Breakfast every day
- 1 evening meal
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Matsumoto
- Entrance to Nagano Zenko-ji Temple
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Kanazawa

Until 150 years ago, Kanazawa was the fourth largest city in Japan, its wealth built on rice production and long periods of peace. The city has retained its charm with elegant, winding backstreets, the beautiful gardens of Kenrokuen, and the domineering, recently rebuilt, Kanazawa Castle.

From the mid-sixteenth century, Kanazawa was the seat of the Maeda Clan who ruled the city for nearly three centuries. The story of the Maeda Clan is one of wealth, excess and violence alongside extensive patronage of the arts. Their period of rule became known as the Hyakumangoku Period, meaning 'one million bushels of rice': the way their wealth was measured and in anyone's book, an awful lot of rice! The samurai are long gone but the legacy of the Maeda clan's generosity can still be seen in modern day Kanazawa.

The city prides itself on its refined heritage. Wandering into Higashiyama, the city's geisha district, will transport you into another world where you can slip into a tea shop and enjoy a few moments' rest and relaxation. In Nagamachi, visitors can reflect on the honour and dignity of the samurai, while at the 'Ninja Temple' you'll taste the treachery and espionage rife in Kanazawa's past. Numerous traditional crafts such as *kutani* pottery, *kaga yuzen* silk dyeing, and gold leaf work are still practised in small family-run workshops.

The Japanese appreciation for the four seasons is no more evident than in Kenrokuen Garden. A profusion of soft pink blossom in spring is fast followed by summer irises. In autumn, the Japanese maples take centre stage and in winter the trees are protected with *yuki zura*, ropes tied to the trees to protect the branches from heavy snowfall.

Kanazawa features as a stop on our **Japan Unmasked**, **Spring Elegance**, **Japan Enchantment** and **Gourmet Deluxe** tours.



# Tokaido Trail

9 nights

TOKYO (2) – KAMAKURA (1) – HAKONE (2) – KYOTO (3) –  
EXCURSION DAY - TOKYO (1)

**From the high-tech thrills of super sleek Tokyo to serene Zen gardens and hidden temples of ancient Kyoto, this journey along the ancient Tokaido highway is a fantastic introduction to Japan's uniquely vibrant culture.**

Take your time over exquisite traditional *kaiseki* cuisine in Kamakura, relax in the velvety-soft volcanic waters of Hakone's hot spring *onsen* baths, see geisha glide through the streets of Kyoto's Gion district, and experience the sound of the *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' thundering past at breathtaking speeds.

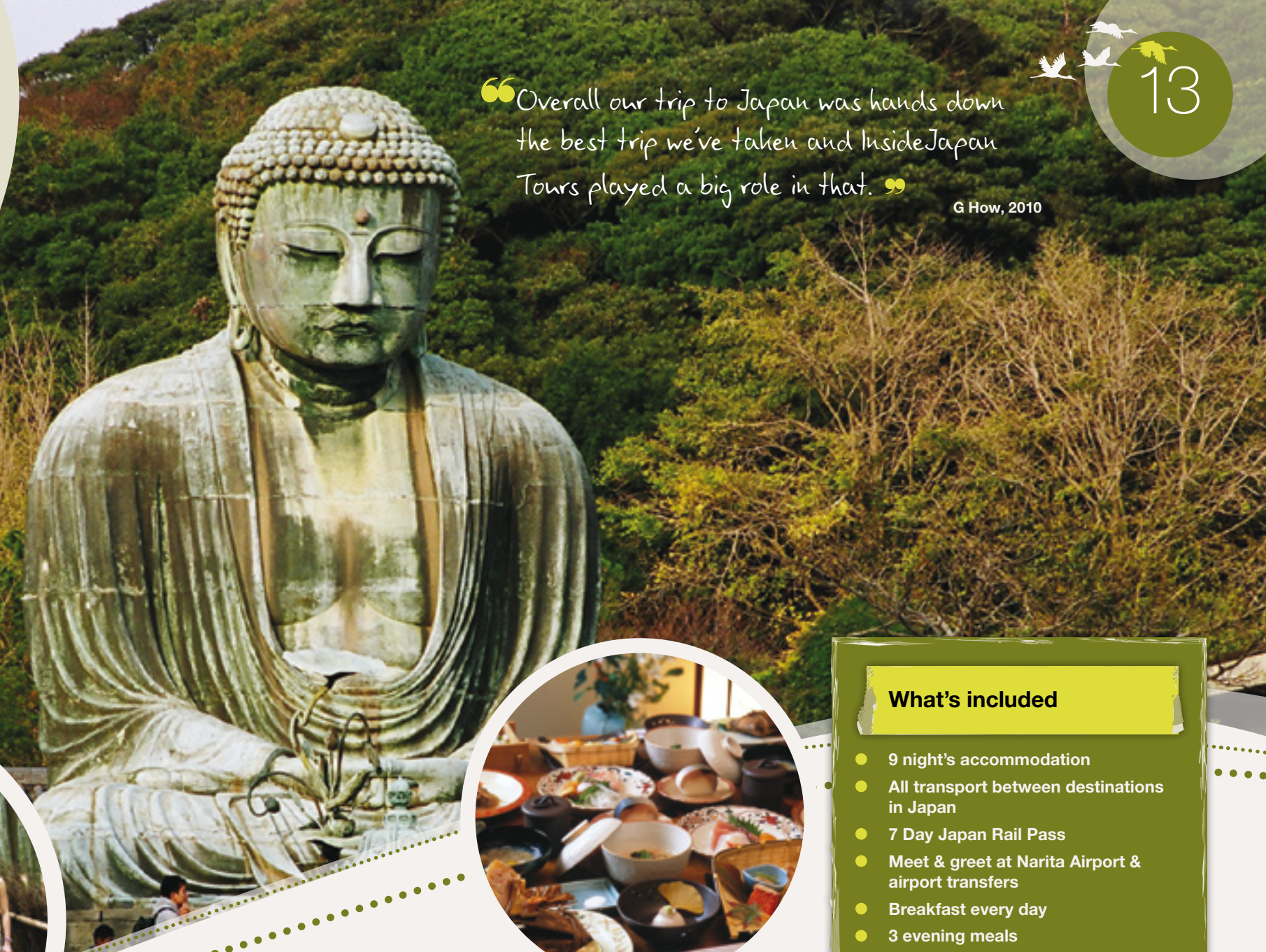
The Tokaido Trail allows you to get a taste of two of Japan's most famous cities; on the one hand, the ultra modern Tokyo Metropolis and on the other, Kyoto, with its traditional architecture and cultural heritage. The tour whisks you away from the city and fills your lungs with the Pacific sea air of the small temple town of Kamakura. Follow this by heading deep into the mountains of the Hakone national park with its steaming volcanoes and picturesque Lake Ashi, the ideal view point for the majestic but notoriously shy, Mount Fuji.

Combining modern, centrally-located business hotels with friendly traditional inns and transfers by public transport throughout, the Tokaido Trail provides a slice of everyday Japanese life. You'll have the chance to enjoy breakfast alongside suited *salarymen*, 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. Japan is a sensory experience like nowhere else. A feast for the eyes, ears and of course, the taste buds.

The included excursion day is an opportunity to visit any one of a number of fascinating destinations: the giant Buddha and sacred deer of Nara; Hikone's magnificent original samurai castle; the haunting A-Bomb Museum and Peace Park in Hiroshima; or Kanazawa, home to the beautiful classical garden Kenrokuen. The hardest part is deciding where to go. Of course you may want to use your day to stay in Kyoto. With its 17 World Heritage sites, thousands of temples and shrines, and unbounded Japanese culture, you will find it hard not to be impressed by the old Imperial capital.

The Tokaido Trail is the perfect tour for anyone wanting to discover this inspiring nation for the first time. This nine night cultural adventure brings you a menagerie of new sights, sounds, tastes and experiences at every turn and a collection of memories that will last a lifetime.



“Overall our trip to Japan was hands down the best trip we've taken and InsideJapan Tours played a big role in that.”

G How, 2010

## What's included

- 9 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 7 Day Japan Rail Pass
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 3 evening meals
- Tokyo transport card
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Hakone Freepass for local transport in Hakone
- Geisha district evening walking tour in Kyoto
- Luggage forwarding between Kamakura & Osaka
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Kaiseki cuisine

*Kaiseki-ryori* is an artistic and gracious form of Japanese cuisine, which has both Buddhist and Shinto roots.

*Kaiseki* was first a minimalist meal designed to complement the tea ceremony. The word comes from the Japanese for pocket, *kai*, and stone, *seki*. Buddhist priests put warm stones in their *kimono* pockets to forget their empty stomachs while studying and meditating. This style of food was originally vegetarian and was designed to satisfy only 80 percent of a person's hunger, in line with Buddhist teachings of austerity and simplicity.

These small dishes soon evolved into full scale feasts; enough to satisfy the nobility who had taken their Buddhist vows but still wanted to enjoy fine food. These days the meal itself can contain up to as many as 12 courses consisting of steamed, simmered or grilled dishes, sliced raw fish *sashimi*, *tempura*, soup, rice, pickles and a small dessert. The food served depends on the season and contains a whole spectrum of flavours. Each course compliments the next and only the best ingredients and utensils are used.

Sometimes the fine porcelain and pottery, or the scrolls in the room, can be of as much interest to a customer as the food itself. Often items from nature, such as leaves and flowers, accompany the meal.

A treat for the all the senses *kaiseki-ryori* is best enjoyed seated in a *tatami* room with a view over a peaceful Japanese garden – pure pleasure!

Most of our tours include a beautifully prepared *kaiseki ryori* meal. With each dish a stunning work of art, be sure not to forget your camera.



# Essential Honshu

## 14 nights

TOKYO (2) – KAMAKURA (1) – HAKONE (2) – OSAKA (2) –  
EXCURSION DAY - KYOTO (2) – TAKAYAMA (2) – KAMIKOCHI (2) –  
TOKYO (1)

**Japan has myriad sights and experiences and you will be amazed at how many of these we have managed to fit into our action packed Essential Honshu tour. From the dazzling neon-lit districts of Tokyo we will journey to the star-filled skies of Kamikochi National Park, deep in the heart of the Japanese Alps.**

The Essential Honshu tour offers something for every visitor to Japan, whether you wish to marvel at the aesthetic beauty of Kamakura's giant Buddha statue, play *pachinko* alongside rows of *salarymen* in Osaka, or hike to the highest peaks of the Japanese Alps. The tour takes you from the extremes of the bright lights and down-to-earth vibe of Osaka high into the fresh mountain air and stunning natural scenery of Kamikochi. Along the way we will sample *okonomiyaki* pancakes in downtown Tokyo, fine *kaiseki* cuisine in Kamakura and the best rustic cooking at our *minshuku* in Takayama. This is a culinary tour for your taste buds as well as an adventure for your eyes.

Each season is full of different images and opportunities. Our July and August departures bring the opportunity to climb to the summit of Mount Fuji, Japan's most sacred mountain. Our overnight ascent to the top of Japan is timed to see the sun rise over the distant horizon, lighting up the world to reveal the lakes, mountains and rivers below. Outside of the climbing season, we explore Hakone National Park, riding a boat across Lake Ashi and walking one of the old samurai trading routes. Either way, mineral-rich hot spring *onsen* waters await you in Hakone to soak away any aches and pains.

A thrilling chance encounter with a geisha scurrying to her evening appointment in historic Kyoto contrasting with a visit to the fashion and food capital of Osaka sums up the unique eccentricities of Honshu, Japan's largest and most diverse island. An excursion day from Osaka allows you to use the included Japan Rail Pass to visit Hiroshima or Nara for no extra cost.

With accommodation in quality business hotels and simple, family-run traditional inns, 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.



## Climbing Mt. Fuji

Our July and August Essential Honshu and Tokaido Trail departures give you the opportunity to climb all 3,776 metres (12,388 feet) of Japan's most iconic symbol, 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. The distant twinkling lights of Tokyo are replaced by the lakes, mountains and valleys below as the rays of the sun warm the weary limbs of the pilgrims who have struggled to the top.

During the climbing season, like a swarm of fireflies a trail of glowing headlamps can be seen for miles ascending in a long winding trail all the way to the summit. For those climbing in the dark, the end is always in sight!

A famous Japanese proverb says you're a fool not to climb Mount Fuji, but only a fool does it twice! This is certainly no easy walk in the park. 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 once you reach the summit, where temperatures often drop below zero degrees. For those making the climb in the early hours to see the sunrise, there are several huts along the way that serve hot food and drinks to keep you motivated.

Don't be fooled by the descent which from the top looks like a leisurely stroll back to the fifth station. In reality the descent is as tough on the knees as the ascent is on the calves, giving you an all-round lower body work-out! This really is not a mountain to be taken lightly.

The reward of reaching the summit and seeing sunrise far outweighs the hardship. After a tough climb we recommend easing away the aches and pains by relaxing in a hot spring bath back at your traditional inn.

Your gallant tour leader will be there every step of the way to coax and encourage you to the top. Or, if travelling independently during July and August, a Mount Fuji climb can be scheduled in as part of any Self-Guided Adventure or Fully Tailored holiday. Whichever option you choose, this is a magical experience and you will never forget standing on the very top of Japan.

“ This wasn't so much a holiday as a cultural immersion! A totally amazing experience ”

A. Stone, 2009

### What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 7 Day Japan Rail pass
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals including Kamikochi BBQ
- Tokyo transport card
- Hakone Freepass
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Geisha district walking tour in Kyoto
- Luggage forwarding between Kamakura & Osaka, Takayama & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack



# Hidden Japan

## 14 nights

TOKYO (2) – HIKONE (1) – MIYAJIMA (2) – MATSUYAMA (1) – KOTOHIRA AND THE IYA VALLEY (2) – NARA (1) – MOUNT KOYA (1) – KYOTO (3) – TOKYO (1)

**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 Mount Koya.**

Set against the backdrop of the cherry blossom in Spring, the lush green of summer and the fiery reds and oranges of the leaves in Autumn, Hidden Japan is a voyage of discovery. Tokyo makes for a dramatic starting point 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.

The *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' will whisk your group west as you step back in time exploring the samurai castle at Hikone. You will then cruise through the islands of the Inland Sea before beginning your exploration of Shikoku Island. Japan's oldest *onsen* hot spring baths await you in Matsuyama, a chance to soak away your cares before joining the ranks of the *junreisha* pilgrims, making the climb to the top of Kotohira's *Kompira-san* with its 900 steps. In the evening your efforts will be rewarded with a dinner of luxurious *kaiseki* cuisine at a beautiful traditional inn.

At Mount Koya, a temple lodging provides your accommodation for the night, allowing you to experience the ceremony and ritual that has been a part of this sacred mountaintop Buddhist retreat for over a thousand years. This contrasts vividly with the bustle of modern Kyoto, your final destination; a modern city but one where the rich heritage of Japan's history reveals itself like no other.

With additional stops in Hiroshima, to visit the A-Bomb museum and Peace Park, and 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.



"We had a great trip... Accommodations, transportation, meals and itinerary were perfect for us."

A. Bissett, 2010

### What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 14 day Japan Rail Pass
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 6 evening meals & 2 lunches
- Tokyo transport card
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Full day touring by private minibus in the Iya Valley
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Miyajima, Miyajima & Kotohira, Nara & Kyoto
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Samurai Japan

From the ninth to the nineteenth century, samurai dominated Japan. These highly skilled warriors lived by the sword, following a strict moral code known as *bushido* (way of the warrior), heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism. To prove honour, the samurai would commit ritualized acts of suicide known as *seppuku*. The samurai were also highly trained in the arts; calligraphy and tea ceremony were just as important as battle skills and swordsmanship.

Today the spirit of the samurai lives on; loyalty, respect and self discipline are the pillars of Japanese society.

Visitors to Japan can get a feel for samurai life by visiting a Japanese castle. While many castles were destroyed by bombing or fire, Hidden Japan presents the opportunity to visit two of the eight remaining originals. Overlooking Lake Biwa, Hikone Castle boasts a unique combination of architectural styles and is a designated national treasure, while Matsuyama Castle commands spectacular views of the surrounding area.

On our tours that include Kanazawa - **Japan Enchantment**, **Japan Unmasked**, **Gourmet Deluxe** and **Spring Elegance** - there is also a unique chance to visit Nagamachi, a former samurai district and *Ninja-dera*, a temple that comes complete with trapdoors and concealed rooms.

# A Northern Soul

## 14 nights

TOKYO (2) – NIKKO (2) – SENDAI (2) – HIRAIZUMI (2) –  
NARUKO ONSEN (1) – MOUNT HAGURO (1) – NIIGATA (1) –  
SADO ISLAND (2) – TOKYO (1)

**To the north-east of Tokyo the Tohoku region stretches out for some 700 miles, a gentler Japan than that of the western coast; one characterised by its paddy fields, ancient mountaintop monasteries, friendly rural towns and villages. A Northern Soul will connect you to a Japan few tourists experience.**

Following two days exploring the huge futuristic megalopolis that is Tokyo, we'll head to the World Heritage site of Nikko. Here the lakes, mountains, waterfalls and hot springs of the national park contrast and complement the lavish religious architecture of Toshogu Shrine, the final resting place of the first Tokugawa Shogun.

Whisked further north by *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train', the regional capital Sendai is a city with a rich history which can be experienced through visits to the restored castle and the ornate mausoleum of the region's most powerful warlord, Masamune Date. A short distance down the coast, the beautiful island-studded Matsushima bay offers relaxation and a chance to sample the fabulous local oysters!

The elaborate temples and gardens of rural Hiraizumi echo the glory of this former powerhouse in samurai history. A short train journey takes you through the sleepy Tohoku countryside, admiring the valleys and ravines along the way, to soak in the hot spring waters of *Naruko Onsen* and experience the natural geothermal phenomena that make up the area. After cleansing your body, cleanse your soul at temple lodgings at the base of Mount Haguro. Here you'll experience the mysticism of Japanese Buddhism at this most holy of mountains.

Our next stop is Niigata, the country's sake capital, owing to high quality rice and the purity of the local water. Then it's on to remote Sado Island. Formerly a place of harsh exile for poets, priests and feudal lords, Sado is now famous for its *taiko* drumming and natural coastal scenery. As the sun slips beneath the horizon creating spectacular ocean sunsets, this is a fitting climax to this voyage of discovery.

Staying at a variety of traditional Japanese *ryokan*, exquisite cuisine is a highlight of this journey into rural Japan. With a wealth of traditional Japanese culture, picture-perfect countryside and warm-hearted locals, A Northern Soul offers a unique insight to this little-visited corner of Japan.



“We thoroughly enjoyed our first trip to Japan. Our tour leader was brilliant”

D Wright, 2010



## Sado Island

Sado Island is the sixth largest island in the Japanese archipelago, lying across the water from the city of Niigata on the Japan Sea coast.

In the middle ages, Sado was the final destination for political dissidents and criminals who were subjected to years of hard labour in the gold mines. Among the exiles were Emperor Juntoku, the Buddhist priest Nichinen Shonin and the famous Noh dramatist Zeami. Despite the hardships endured by the prisoners, many arts flourished on the island leaving a rich cultural heritage which still thrives.

Today the 855 km<sup>2</sup> island is sparsely populated. As a result the island offers mountainous countryside, rugged coastlines, hidden beaches and grottos. Ancient tradition lives on in tiny coastal villages and you may witness fisherwomen setting sail in small round tubs to catch seafood in the shallow waters. Often tourists are invited to join them; go ahead and see what the day's catch brings!

Sado's remote wilderness is nowhere more apparent than on the Skyline Road which climbs in a series of steep curves and switchbacks to the top of Kinpoku-san, the island's highest point. The breathtaking views across fields of wild azaleas and the open sea beyond confirm Sado's status as the perfect Japanese getaway.

Once in a while, however, the quiet is shattered when the Ondeko Drummers unleash their hypnotic rhythms. Japanese drumming is something to be seen as well as heard, as costumed performers use stylised choreography to beat huge barrel shaped drums.

**A Northern Soul** spends days 12 and 13 on Sado Island. Highlights of your stay include a drive along the breathtaking Skyline road, as well as a visit to the fascinating gold mine, which in its day was one of the most productive in the world.

### What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 4 Day flexi Japan Rail Pass
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 10 evening meals
- Sumida River boat cruise
- Tokyo & Nikko transport cards
- Private bus & selected entrance fees on Sado Island
- Luggage forwarding between Naruko Onsen & Niigata, Niigata & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack



# Kyushu Elements

14 nights

TOKYO (2) – NAGASAKI (2) – UNZEN (1) – MOUNT ASO (2) –  
BEPPU (2) – KAGOSHIMA (2) – YAKUSHIMA (2) – TOKYO (1)

**Kyushu is 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, this little visited island is a 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 a result it 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 and the ancient World Heritage forests of Yakushima Island, Kyushu showcases Japan's stunning natural and cultural diversity.

Travelling by plane, ferry and train, we'll also ride the brand new Kyushu *Shinkansen* 'Bullet train' straight down the western side of the island to Kagoshima. Accommodation is similarly varied; a mix of Western-style hotels and traditional Japanese inns with many great evening meals included.

Having prayed for good fortune at Tokyo's Senso-ji Temple 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 then swap Nagasaki's stunning natural harbour for the volcanic martian landscapes of Unzen Onsen and steaming slopes of Mount Aso; a close up reminder of the powerful forces of nature lying just beneath Japan's surface.

For aficionados of bathing, Kyushu Elements provides chances aplenty to experience what the Japanese call *hadaka no tomadachi* or 'naked kinship' with *onsen* baths available at most destination stops. Beppu offers not just great hot springs, but sand baths on the beach, mud baths and steam baths, for rest and relaxation Japanese-style.

From the city of Kagoshima that sits in the shadow of the steaming Sakurajima volcano, the trip heads over to Yakushima Island for the finale. The island is referred to as 'the Alps of the Sea' with Mount Miyanoura soaring almost 2,000 metres from beneath the ocean to present beautiful sandy beaches encircled by century old forests of wizened Japanese cedar trees and rare wildlife; a place that is sure to enchant you.

Before the tour disbands and we head our separate ways, we will be flying back to Tokyo for a final night in the capital. Kyushu Elements offers an experience of Japan like no other and the bubbling waters, steaming volcanoes, ancient forests and warm welcome are sure to live long in the memory.



“The range of accommodation and transport gave a good opportunity to get a little closer to experiencing Japan. The range of meal options was also very interesting - from being dinner guest in ryokan and inns to popping in and out of the busy little cafés full of locals enjoying the menu specialities”

J. Forsyth, 2009



## What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals
- Tokyo transport card
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Selected entrance fees in Mount Aso & Beppu
- Local Guide in Yakushima
- Private Bus in Mount Aso & Yakushima
- Luggage forwarding between Nagasaki & Aso, Kagoshima & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Ryokan & minshuku

All of our Self-Guided Adventures and Small Group Tours include stays in Japanese-style inns, known as *ryokan* or *minshuku*. This is a fantastic experience especially when combined with *onsen* hot spring baths and included evening meals – always prepared using the freshest local and seasonal produce.

*Ryokan* and *minshuku* are often small, family-run establishments where a warm welcome is all part of the service and a key feature of our Golden Route trip. Leaving your shoes in the *genkan* entranceway, you will step into the world of Japanese hospitality, service and style.

Japanese-style rooms are simply decorated with sliding doors, wood-framed paper screens and calligraphy on hanging scrolls. You will sleep on thick futons laid out on soft *tatami* mat flooring. During the day the futons are put away and you can sit around a traditional *kotatsu* table to enjoy tea and Japanese sweets. Deluxe *ryokan* have fully en suite rooms, often with an attached *rotenburo* outdoor hot spring bath for your own private use. Simpler *minshuku* will generally have communal bathing facilities.

On our **Kyushu Elements** itinerary you will spend several nights in Japanese-style accommodation, with fabulous evening meals included. The inns also have their own *onsen* hot spring baths for you to sit back and relax in after a day seeing the sights.



# Winter Highlights

## 14 nights

TOKYO (2) – SAPPORO (3) – TSURUI (1) – RAUSU (1) – ABASHIRI (1) – KYOTO (3) – YUDANAKA (2) – TOKYO (1)

**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'.**

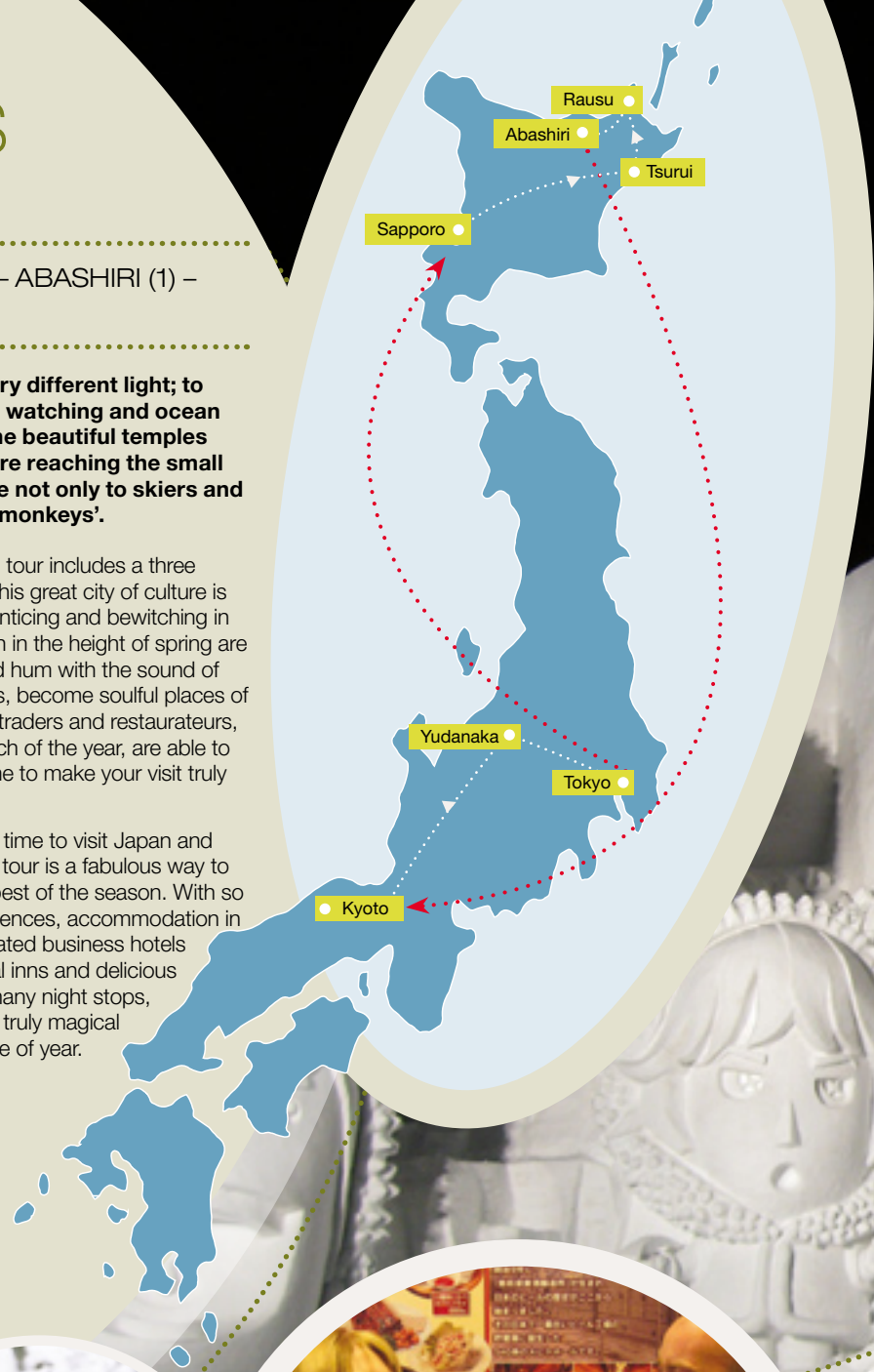
In the far north, the island of Hokkaido is a winter paradise. You will be visiting Sapporo during the famous Snow Festival where glistening ice sculptures turn central park into a magical winter wonderland. A fantastic tour for nature lovers, we will also take you out into Hokkaido's wide, snow-covered plains and across serene lakes.

Opportunities abound for seeing rare birdlife. In Tsurui you will visit the nesting grounds of the elegant red-crowned crane and have a unique opportunity to photograph their ritual mating dances. The tour also visits Rausu, a small fishing town on the remote Shiretoko Peninsula. Boarding a small ice-breaking boat, you will be sailing into the ice floes of the Sea of Okhotsk, where vast numbers of Steller's sea eagle gather on the ice; a spectacular and breathtaking sight.

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

Our Winter Highlights tour includes a three night stay in Kyoto. This great city of culture is perhaps at its most enticing and bewitching in winter. Temples which in the height of spring are full to overflowing and hum with the sound of the chattering crowds, become soulful places of quiet reflection; local traders and restaurateurs, so rushed during much of the year, are able to relax and take the time to make your visit truly special.

Winter is a wonderful time to visit Japan and our Winter Highlights tour is a fabulous way to experience the very best of the season. 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 magical time of year.



“The guiding, as mentioned before, was superior to any expectation, and really added an extra special touch to the whole tour experience”

S. Morris, 2009

### What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Tokyo transport card
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- Breakfast every day
- 7 evening meals
- Ice-breaker cruise in Rausu
- Private minibus transport & local guide in Tsurui
- Guided walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- Luggage forwarding between Sapporo & Abashiri, Kyoto & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Tancho red-crowned cranes

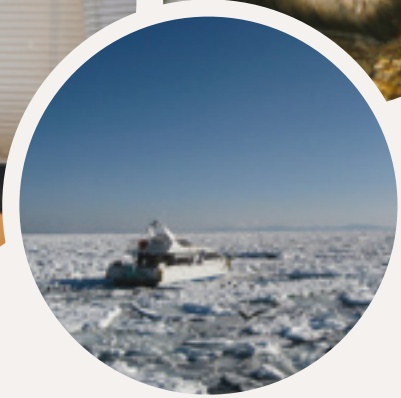
The red-crowned crane, *grus japonensis* or *tancho* as it's known in Japanese is undoubtedly a beautiful bird; the largest and most distinctive species in the crane family. The average *tancho* stands 1.5 metres tall, weighs 8 kg and has a 2.5 metre wing span. Its body is snow-white while the black head has a brilliant white stripe crowned with a patch of red skin.

*Tancho* dance more than any other crane. In an elaborate mating ritual, the male birds throw their backs, beaks and wings skywards during a unison call to females who cry back in response. A coordinated dance follows involving bowing, jumping, running, throwing grass in the air and flapping wings; an amazing spectacle to watch.

*Tancho* have long been important to the Japanese. According to folklore they live for one thousand years making them a symbol of longevity. Because *tancho* mate for life, they also represent fidelity and are a popular symbol in wedding ceremonies. In 1952 the *tancho* was designated the national bird of Japan.

Devastated by World War Two and after the severe winter of 1950, the *tancho* population dropped to just 25 birds. After a careful conservation programme, world numbers now stand at 1,500, of which 900 are currently to be found in Hokkaido. However, *tancho* continue to be threatened by loss of habitat. Agricultural expansion, reed harvesting, deforestation, road building and poisoning from pesticides are just some of the ways that humans have impacted on the *tancho*'s natural environment.

The **Winter Highlights** tour includes a visit to the crane sanctuary at Tsurui which is at the forefront of the conservation efforts to increase *tancho* numbers.



# Spring Elegance

## 13 nights

TOKYO (3) – MATSUMOTO (1) – TAKAYAMA (2) – KANAZAWA (1) –  
KYOTO (3) – EXCURSION DAY - HAKONE (2) – TOKYO (1)

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 and your journey will capture the heart of Japan swathed in pink. Join the viewing parties in Tokyo or stroll amongst the petals in Kyoto; the *sakura* cherry blossom are never far away.

Spring Elegance shows the best of Japan in all its glory, from the skyscrapers of Tokyo to the high peaks of the Japanese Alps. Relive the samurai battles of old through the windows of Matsumoto Castle, take a stroll through the immaculate gardens of Kanazawa, then travel high into the stunning mountains and on to the market town of Takayama. Here the experiences of the day will be matched by tempting local delicacies and impeccable service during your stay in a beautiful traditional *ryokan* (Japanese-style inn).

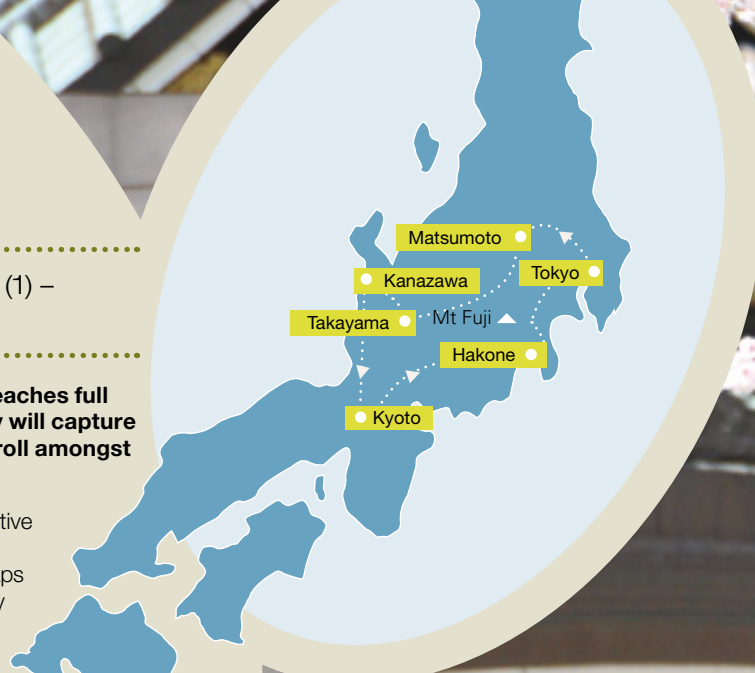
A ride on the famous *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train' delivers you to the imperial city of Kyoto, the epicentre of Japan's history and culture. Ancient temples lie hidden around every corner waiting to be discovered, while doll-like geisha totter gracefully between appointments. In Hakone, take in the magnificent views of Mount Fuji then lie back in one of the mineral rich *onsen* hot springs, relax and soak up all that Japan has to offer.

Using your included seven day Japan Rail Pass, an excursion day allows you to speed by *Shinkansen* to Hiroshima or visit the historic city of Nara to stroll through the deer park and marvel at the Big Buddha sitting serenely within his huge wooden temple. You may just wish to

stay in Kyoto and enjoy the attractive Arashiyama district sitting on the banks of the Hozu river; or perhaps stroll along the Path of Philosophy and enjoy the blossoms as generations of Kyoto residents have done before you.

Blooming date for the *sakura* is different every year, but the Spring Elegance tour is designed to make sure that you will be able to see the cherry blossom somewhere along the route, whether it be at its peak in Tokyo, just starting to appear in the Japanese Alps or gently falling to the ground in Kyoto.

With four delicious evening meals included and some accommodation treats along the way, Spring Elegance is a great way to enjoy this beautiful season.



“Had a fabulous time on tour! It's flexible so you can stick with the group or do your own thing, and the tour leader is happy to help with info and directions when you're branching out. You don't feel rushed with plenty of time to go exploring”

F. Findlay, 2010



## Hanami

Cherry blossom or *sakura* is considered by many to be Japan's national flower. In early spring when these flowers bloom, Japan is awash with pink; a spectacular backdrop to your sightseeing. The unpredictability of nature makes the exact blooming date an issue of keen discussion in early spring and the 'cherry blossom front' is 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. The usually reserved Japanese really let their hair down at this time of year, using the blossom as a good excuse to eat, drink *sake* and sing *karaoke*!

*Hanami* is a ritual that has been observed for centuries. In the days of the samurai, cherry blossom symbolised the death of a soldier at his physical peak. *Sakura* came to represent the samurai way of life and *hanami* parties became a popular event within the warrior class.

For modern Japanese, the brief life span of *sakura* petals is a reminder of the fleeting nature of life itself and taking part in *hanami* celebrations is a fantastic way to get to the heart of Japanese tradition and culture.

*Hanami* parties are enjoyed all over Japan during cherry blossom season. Even in the big cities venues such as Ueno Park in central Tokyo and Maruyama Park in Kyoto provide beautiful backdrops for *hanami* celebrations attracting huge crowds every year. For our tours that coincide with the cherry blossom season, our tour leaders are always keen to join in the celebrations and will often arrange a *hanami* party for the group. This is a great way to get to know fellow tour members and is a truly magical experience.

### What's included

- 13 night's accommodation in Japan
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- 7 Day Japan Rail Pass
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 4 evening meals
- Tokyo transport card
- Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo & entrance to Hamarikyu Gardens
- Hakone Freepass to cover local transport in Hakone region
- Geisha district evening walking tour in Kyoto
- Tickets for spring geisha dance performance
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Takayama, Takayama & Kyoto, Kyoto & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

# Japan Enchantment

## 14 nights

TOKYO (2) – NIKKO (1) – KARUIZAWA (2) – NAGANO (1) – KANAZAWA (2) – KYOTO (3) – HAKONE (2) – TOKYO (1)

From the high-tech wonders of Tokyo, to the old streets of Kyoto with its must-see temples and shrines, the gardens of Kanazawa and the beautiful Japanese Alps, this comprehensive 14 night tour will give you a great insight into the diversity of modern Japan and allow you to take in the best of Japan's seasonal colours.

Led by Mr Yasuhiko Ota, a retired businessman and expert tour leader, the tour starts and finishes in Tokyo, Japan's capital city and the most densely populated area on the planet. This city is a phenomenon and we will explore the contrasts of both the historic side of the city in Asakusa and the excitement of the modern Shinjuku with its soaring skyscrapers and bright neon lights; the beating heart of the city.

Japan Enchantment takes in the 'Golden Route' sights of Japan with a three night stay in Kyoto, Japan's capital of history and culture, and two nights in the mountainous hot spring resort of Hakone affording views of majestic Mount Fuji.

We'll also head off the beaten track and up into the Japanese Alps, travelling along the 'Romantic Road' from Nikko to Karuizawa, a classic mountain resort town on the Japan Sea coast. A longtime favourite of wealthy Tokyoites, here you will stay at a deluxe traditional inn with en suite Japanese-style rooms and mouth watering gourmet dinners included. Some optional light walking or hiking is the best way to enjoy the dramatic, volcanic landscape or you may prefer to sit back and admire the views from the comfort of the hot spring baths.

In Nikko we'll explore the wonderfully ornate temples and shrines which since 1999 have been designated a World Heritage site. Our stay in Kanazawa gives the opportunity to see one of the very best Japanese gardens, to tour the old samurai and geisha districts and to experience the intriguing 'Ninja Temple'

A trip to Kyoto during the spring and autumn allows you to enjoy the seasonal geisha dance festivals, tickets for which are included in the tour.

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



"Ota-san was a truly excellent tour leader both in terms of his ability to organise the trip and impart his extensive knowledge of Japan. He was also wonderful company and great fun to be with!"

S. Adams, 2009



### What's included

- 14 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations in Japan
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 5 evening meals
- Sumida River boat cruise & Hamarikyū Gardens in Tokyo
- Tokyo transport card
- 'Miyako Odori', 'Kamogawa Odori' or 'Gion Odori' geisha dance tickets
- Selected entrance fees & local transport
- Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Karuizawa, Kyoto & Tokyo
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

## Geisha dances

Every April, May and November, the usually secretive geisha world throws open its doors for mesmerising *Odori Matsuri* dance festivals. The performances celebrate the geisha's skill and grace, combining lavish costumes and intricate dance movements with a unique style of music and song.

The mainly Japanese audience get the rare opportunity to enjoy these traditional geisha arts usually only seen within the walls of invitation-only tea houses. Each of the highly stylised dances tells a story. Set against vibrantly painted changing backdrops of the four seasons, these echo the ebb and flow of life. A true celebration of the season.

The *Odori Matsuri* offers the chance to lose yourself in the romanticism and mystery of Japan's past and to gain a small insight into the esoteric geisha arts. Dance tickets are included on **Japan Enchantment**, **Spring Elegance** and **Gourmet Deluxe** and are an optional extra on any tour travelling during festival dates.



# Nature & Culture

## 13 nights

TOKYO (2) – KARUIZAWA (2) – MATSUMOTO (2) –  
JAPANESE ALPS (3) – MAGOME (1) – KYOTO (3)

**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 five days amongst nature hiking in the stunning Japanese Alps.**

Visits to Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan's most famous cities, are combined with multi-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 ancient path winds between the well preserved towns of Nagiso and Tsumago, through fields, rice paddies and past old wooden houses. The gentle hike here is topped off with a night in the quaint village of Magome where, amidst the narrow streets and winding paths, we stay in a traditional Japanese inn with an *irori* style fireplace and warm Japanese hospitality.

Oscar will lead two hikes deeper into the mountains one of which heads above the tree-line and includes a mountain hut stay. These hikes, which are of moderate difficulty, give the best chance to enjoy some fantastic views and hopefully see Japanese macaque monkeys, Japanese serow and, if you are lucky, the wild Asiatic black bear that still live in the northern Japanese mountains.

The group for this tour is limited to just eight people allowing you to see Japanese nature up close and to share Oscar's expertise and knowledge. Talks during the tour will cover topics such as bear and human conflict and the difficulties of nature conservation within modern Japan.

Having explored the mountains, the tour concludes with three nights in Kyoto. You can join Oscar to visit some of his favourite sights or if you prefer, you can look around independently and at your leisure.

Accommodation is a mix of Western-style (mostly in the cities) and traditional, with futons laid out in beautiful Japanese *tatami* rooms. For those wanting the full Japanese experience, you will also have the option of a homestay with a Japanese family in Matsumoto, a great way to make new friends and understand more about Japanese life.

Nature and Culture gives the chance to delve deep into Japan's countryside, to explore the mountain paths and enjoy stunning views, to see rare animals in their natural habitats and to learn from an expert about Japan's natural history.



## 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. Nowadays they 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 Huygens is one of the three 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 saved the lives of hundreds of bears, while their scientific research programme has led to the publication of over 15 peer-reviewed papers in international scientific journals.

Oscar is a great travel companion, is extremely enthusiastic and passionate about nature and wildlife and during the tour is more than happy to share his stories and experiences.

“Japan was a unique experience for us... The homestay that Oscar arranged for us was a true lasting highlight”

C Arenz, 2010

### What's included

- 13 night's accommodation
- All transport between destinations
- Airport meet & greet & return airport transfers
- Breakfast every day
- 9 other meals (lunch or dinner)
- Tokyo transport card
- Luggage forwarding between Matsumoto & Kyoto
- Kyoto 2 day bus pass
- Entrance to Matsumoto castle
- Entrance to selected Kyoto temples & gardens
- Full time services of your Tour Leader, Oscar Huygens
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack



# Gourmet Deluxe

13 nights

TOKYO (4) – KANAZAWA & YAMANAKA ONSEN (2) –  
KYOTO (4) – TOKYO (1)

**Japan is an enigma in the modern world; a technological and economic powerhouse with ancient traditions. Using our 10 years experience as a specialist tour operator to Japan, we have created the Gourmet Deluxe tour to offer the finest in Japanese hospitality and culture as well as a fascinating insight into the diversity of the country.**

This tour combines five star comforts with a genuine close-up experience of Japan. We'll travel using a combination of the *Shinkansen* 'Bullet Train', in first class of course, and a private luxury coach. Accommodation is at two of the best hotels in Tokyo and Kyoto - the Peninsula Tokyo and the Kyoto Granvia - along with a fantastic high-class *ryokan* traditional Japanese inn, in the hot spring village of Yamanaka Onsen near Kanazawa

As to be expected of any gourmet tour, you will get to enjoy some of the very best in Japanese dining. At your *ryokan* you will be served fine *kaiseki* cuisine in uniquely beautiful surroundings, whilst in Tokyo and Kyoto we shall be dining at both Michelin star establishments and lesser known gems. You will also have the chance to sample the freshest sushi at Tokyo's renowned Tsukiji fish market.

However, this tour is not all about fine dining: Japan offers fabulous food at all levels and we shall be introducing you to the joys of more everyday fare such as *okonomiyaki* pancakes and *ramen* noodles. As well as eating it, you shall have the opportunity to learn about some of the techniques of preparing Japanese food, visit produce markets and get hands on at a Japanese cookery class with an expert local chef. Other experiences on the tour include tea ceremony, *soba* making, a pottery workshop, paper making and *sake* rice wine tasting with a sommelier.

At each destination we shall be visiting the classic sights; Asakusa's Senso-ji Temple, Meiji Shrine and Hamarikyu Gardens in Tokyo; The Golden Pavilion and Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto; Kenrokuen gardens and Myoryuji, the 'Ninja Temple', in Kanazawa.

Perhaps the cultural and dining highlight of the tour, in Kyoto we are arranging an exclusive engagement at a local restaurant with a *maiko* and geisha. During dinner the geisha will perform traditional dances following which you'll have the opportunity to talk with her, ask questions and play traditional games with an expert interpreter present.

Travelling in autumn, the spectacular back-drop to this tour is the changing leaves which blaze a trail of red and crimson across the country. The tour is accompanied throughout (including airport meet and greet and initial airport transfer) by an experienced InsideJapan Tours tour leader and for five days we will also have the company of a professional English speaking local guide. The maximum group size is 12, so you'll be assured the very best personal service. Our Gourmet Deluxe tour is sure to be a fabulous culinary and dining experience that will live long in the memory.



Kanazawa  
Yamanaka Onsen  
Kyoto  
Tokyo



## The Iron Chef

If there is one cooking show that trumps them all then it has to be Japan's iconic Iron Chef. Debuting in 1993, the show theatrically pitted challenging chefs from around the world against the resident team of 'Iron chefs' in a timed battle to create the most innovative and sublime offerings based around a single themed ingredient, which had to be present in each dish served. These were judged by a panel, which in addition to professional foodies, included diverse personalities such as former Grand Champion sumo wrestler Akebono and Hollywood Star Jackie Chan.

Set in the 'Kitchen Stadium' in the host's 'castle', the chefs would do battle dressed in Power Ranger-like brightly coloured outfits that would become their trademark. Each chef specialised in a different style of cuisine - French, Chinese, Italian and of course, Japanese. The marvel for the audience and the judges was how the chefs would regularly concoct extraordinary over the top and at times plain bizarre dishes in the quest to "best express the unique qualities of the theme ingredient" - anyone for squid ink and salmon roe ice cream?

With over 300 episodes in the bag and the retirement of several of the original 'Iron Chefs', the show left the airwaves in 1999, returning for occasional one-off specials up until the Kitchen Stadium finally closed its doors in 2002.

However, the story does not end there, The Iron Chef was picked up by the Cooking Channel in the US and became a cult hit before finally spawning Iron Chef America with Australian and UK versions apparently on the horizon. But, however successful (or otherwise) the spin-offs go on to be, surely none will match the original for its flair, extravagance and crazy cooking battles!

### What's included

- 13 night's luxury accommodation in Japan
- Breakfast every day
- Lunch on 2 days
- 5 evening meals (including Iron Chef & Michelin star restaurants)
- All transport between destinations in Japan (1st class where available)
- Tokyo transport card
- Meet & greet at Narita Airport & airport transfers
- Full time professional guide for 5 days
- Sake tasting & sake museum visit
- Japanese cooking lesson & soba noodle making
- Tsukiji fish market visit & sushi breakfast
- Tea ceremony experience
- Paper making experience & pottery gallery visit
- Knife workshop experience
- Geisha evening, including geisha dances
- Luggage forwarding on two occasions
- Full time services of your tour leader
- InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack



# Nagoya - Our Home in Japan

Our base in Japan is the port city of Nagoya, historic home of the Tokugawa Shogun and modern-day headquarters for the Toyota Motor Corporation. Conveniently located on the Tokaido Shinkansen line between Tokyo and Kyoto and with its own modern international airport, Nagoya has a wealth of sights and experiences to offer. We are currently celebrating Nagoya's 400th anniversary and would be delighted for you to visit!

On this page are some Nagoya highlights, all of which can easily be incorporated into your Japan visit.

## Toyota factory visit

Take the opportunity to visit the biggest of Japan's car manufacturers, Toyota. The company's headquarters are located in Toyota City just outside Nagoya. There are free English language tours of the high-tech plants on most days and we can make a reservation for you. Next to the headquarters is the Toyota *Kaikan* Exhibition Hall, where Toyota's brand new models and technologies are displayed, which means you will get the chance to see them before anyone else; a must for all car fanatics!

## Nagoya Castle

Originally completed in 1612, **Nagoya Castle** was home of the Owari Tokugawa clan until the Meiji restoration ended Shogunate rule in 1868. The castle was destroyed during World War Two but the *donjon* main keep has now been reconstructed, complete with the iconic

*kinshachi* golden fish perched on the top. The castle features good English language explanations as well as a computerised 3D reconstruction of the Honmaru Palace, the entrance way to which has recently been rebuilt in advance of a full rebuilding due for completion in 2017.

## Tokugawa Art Museum

The Nagoya area was home of the powerful Edo Shogun Tokugawa Iyasu and **Tokugawa Art** museum houses a fascinating collection of artefacts associated with his clan. Swords, armour, *noh* theatre costumes, lacquer furniture and ceramics provide an insight into the flourishing arts of this period of relative stability. The most precious exhibit is the original scroll from the epic twelfth century poem 'The Tale of Genji'.

JR Towers, Nagoya Station



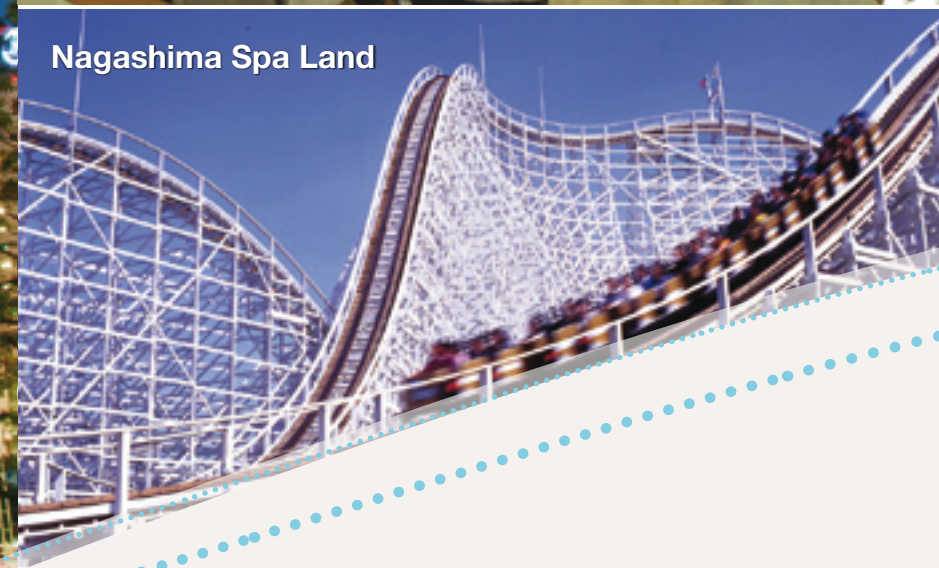
Meiji Mura



Kuragari Gorge



Nagashima Spa Land



Nagoya Castle



Tokugawa Art Museum



Toyota Factory Visit

## Nagashima Spa Land

For something completely different, **Nagashima Spa Land** just outside of Nagoya offers theme park rides, a water park and a beautiful *onsen* hot spring, all within the same complex. Steel Dragon 2000 is the world's longest roller-coaster, while the outdoor seawater pool features 18 different water slides.

## Meiji Mura

The opening of Japan's borders during the Meiji period (1867-1912) saw the country change dramatically as Western thinking influenced architecture, industry and society. **Meiji Mura** is an open air museum showcasing the styles of those heady days. Some sixty historical buildings have been moved and reconstructed in this 247 acre park; the most significant is the main entrance and lobby of Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark Imperial Hotel. The museum includes its own steam railway and is set against the rolling hills of Lake Iruka.

## Kuragari Gorge

The Nagoya region is home to many natural wonders including the impressive **Kuragari Gorge**, a forested area with some fantastic walks and great views. The valley follows the scenic Otoko River as it winds its way through Hongusan nature reserve.

## Atsuta Shrine & Osu Kannon Temple

Nagoya's principle religious sites are **Atsuta Shrine** and **Osu Kannon Temple**. The former is one of the most important shrines in Japan. It enshrines the sun goddess, Amaterasu, and keeps hidden in its precincts the 'sacred sword', one of three sacred Imperial regalia in Japan. Osu Kannon is a bustling Buddhist temple known as much for the surrounding market streets as the temple building itself.

## Modern Nagoya

Spurred on by a booming economy and the 2005 World Expo, Nagoya's skyline is now peppered with modern buildings including the fantastic **JR Towers** and the brand new **Toyota Motor Company headquarters**. **Oasis 21** in the centre of town meanwhile, is a low rise but equally spectacular exhibition space (and bus terminus) while the granddaddy of them all, **Nagoya TV Tower**, has been given a silver facelift and commands great views over the city. An artificial island outside the city is home to Nagoya's international airport, **Centrair**, which opened in 2005 and provides an impressive gateway to the city.

## Holiday descriptions & inclusions

Every effort will be made to deliver your holiday exactly as described in this brochure. Occasionally however, changes have to be made and in this case we will endeavour to inform you as soon as possible.

## Our packages include:

- Accommodation in Japan as detailed
- Most transport between destinations in Japan
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Meals as detailed
- Accommodation taxes and service charges
- Info-Pack with full instructions, maps, sightseeing and eating out advice

## Our packages generally do NOT include:

- International flights (these can be included for UK departures if you wish; please ask)
- Entrance fees and meals other than those detailed
- Local transport (e.g. taxis, subways, local buses)
- Drinks with any included meals
- Incidental costs at your accommodation (telephone calls, drinks, etc)

If you are unsure of the exact inclusions, please ask your booking agent or contact us for further details.

## International flights

If you are departing from the UK, we would be delighted to make flight arrangements for you (please ask for details) or alternatively, you can arrange flights through your travel agent or by yourself. Once your flights are confirmed, please make sure that your booking agent is aware of the full flight details. We are unable to arrange international flights originating outside the UK.

All packages are for arrival and departure at Tokyo Narita Airport (NRT) or Tokyo Haneda Airport (HND). The only exceptions are for the 'Paths Less Travelled' Self-Guided Package which is designed for arrival and departure at Osaka Kansai Airport (KIX) or Osaka Itami Airport (ITM) and for the 'Nature and Culture' Small Group Tour which is designed for arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport (NRT) or Tokyo Haneda Airport (HND) and departure from Osaka Kansai Airport (KIX) or Osaka Itami Airport (ITM).

## Meals

A number of meals are included in most packages. Please advise your booking agent of any dietary requirements and we will do our best to accommodate them.

## Prices

Due to the volatility of currency exchange rates and the flexibility of our itineraries we have not printed any prices in our brochure. For the latest prices please contact us or your local travel agent or check our website: [www.insidejapantours.com](http://www.insidejapantours.com)

When planning your trip please keep in mind that during certain Japanese holiday periods, prices can be a lot higher than usual. The main holiday periods are as follows:

29th December to 4th January - New Year  
29th April to 5th May - Golden Week  
9th August to 17th August - Obon Festival

## How to book, payment & travel documents

You can book by contacting InsideJapan Tours or through your local travel agent. If you are booking through a travel agency, all subsequent correspondence should be made through that agency. For all bookings, please use an InsideJapan Tours' booking form. You will need to read the terms and conditions and sign the booking form to confirm, on behalf of all those in your party, that you accept and understand the terms and conditions.

Your booking agent will advise payment terms at the time of booking. InsideJapan Tours asks for a deposit upon booking and then full payment two months prior to your package start date. Please check with your travel agent for their payment terms as these vary from agent to agent.

After we have processed your booking, we will issue you or your travel agent with a confirmation document which will show exactly what is included in your holiday. Please check all the details carefully and advise your booking agent if there are any mistakes or if there is anything that you do not understand.

Your Info-Pack and other travel documents will be sent to you approximately four weeks before departure. Some tickets may be sent to your first hotel in Japan. Full details of which tickets and documents will be sent and where they will be sent will be shown in your final documentation.

## Late bookings

Bookings made less than four weeks before your planned departure date will be accepted on a case by case basis. In most situations we will be able to confirm your holiday at the current price (as shown on our website or available by contacting us or your travel agent). However, there may be situations where we will have to change the price, inclusions or itinerary. For late bookings we will endeavour to confirm your holiday arrangements and the price within three working days.

## Passports & visas, health advice

It is your responsibility to ensure that you and all members of your party have the correct passports and, if appropriate, visas to enter Japan. At the time of print, citizens of the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not need a visa to visit Japan. If you are unsure, please ask the Japanese Embassy in your home country. You can find a full list of embassies at [www.mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp)

Vaccinations are generally not needed for visiting Japan, but if you suffer from any health problems please consult your doctor before booking. Health care in Japan is usually very good but can be expensive. Your own government will be able to supply the latest health advice regarding a visit to Japan. You may also want to contact the Japan National Tourist Organisation (JNTO) for advice.

## UK: [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad)

## USA: [www.usa.gov/Topics/Usresponse/Travel\\_Safely.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Usresponse/Travel_Safely.shtml)

## JNTO UK: [www.seejapan.co.uk](http://www.seejapan.co.uk)

## JNTO USA: [www.japantravelinfo.com](http://www.japantravelinfo.com)

## JNTO Worldwide: [www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp)

## Travel insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you and all members of your party have adequate travel insurance to cover medical costs and repatriation. You will be asked to sign a booking form to show that you have, or will have, this insurance in place for the duration of your trip. Although not compulsory, we recommend that you also take out cancellation insurance.

## Money & debit / credit cards

Japan is still in many ways a cash society and many shops and restaurants do not accept debit or credit cards. Therefore, you will need to carry Japanese yen in cash while in Japan. You can get Japanese yen cash in advance of your trip or you can exchange US dollar, GB pound or Euro cash and travellers cheques, as well as cash in most other currencies, on arrival at any airport. You can do the same at some banks and post offices during your trip. Please note that bank and post office opening hours are often shorter than in the UK or the US and that they are closed on Saturday afternoons, Sundays and national holidays.

You can also use Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus or Maestro branded credit and debit cards to take money out of ATMs at Japan Post Office branches and Seven Eleven convenience stores; you will need a four digit PIN number to do this. If you plan to do this, please inform your card issuer before departure that you will be using your card abroad, take the card issuer's contact telephone number with you and have a back-up in case of any problems (e.g. take some travellers cheques as well).

## Children

Children aged 12 years or older are treated as adults in terms of accommodation and transport costs. For younger children we can sometimes offer discounts on the published prices; please ask your booking agent for further details. Any children aged 17 years or younger at the time of travel must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or another adult who will assume legal responsibility for them for the duration of the trip.

## Rooms & check-in

Check-in and check-out times vary from hotel to hotel. Check-in can be any time from 13.00 to 16.00 and check-out from 9.00 to 12.00. Please note that in Japan check-in times are strictly adhered to and early check-in requests may well be refused. You can, however, always leave your suitcases with the front desk before check-in time.

Please advise your booking agent if you wish to have smoking or non-smoking hotel rooms and we will do our best to accommodate your wishes. Triple or quad-share rooms may be available upon request; please ask for further details.

## Car hire

If your package includes car hire, the named driver must be in possession of a full and valid driving license from their home country as well as a full and valid International Driving Permit (issued in accordance with the Geneva Convention 1949). Cars drive on the left and most road signs are in English as well as Japanese. Swiss and German driving licence holders need to obtain a Japanese translation of their home country driving licence before departure and cannot use an International Driving Permit.

## Luggage

Porterage is not included as standard in any of our packages although the top hotels in Japan (such as those on our Gourmet Deluxe Small Group Tour) will provide porterage between the front desk and your guest room at their discretion. For all packages you are responsible for carrying your own luggage from place to place. Most train stations have escalators but a few do not. Some trains only have limited luggage space. Please pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you are able to handle your own luggage comfortably. We recommend packing a small, light suitcase with good wheels. Japan does have an excellent luggage forwarding service, *takuhaibin*, which is available from the front desk of most hotels. You can send your luggage from hotel to hotel on an overnight basis. This service is included at pertinent times on our Small Group Tours. Please see the inclusions list on each tour page for details. For the Self-Guided Packages and Fully Tailored Packages you can use this service at a small additional cost (payable in yen at the time of sending) and full instructions will be in your Info-Pack. If you plan to take advantage of this service, it will be useful to have an overnight bag as well as your main bag.

If you have any questions or queries please contact us. If booking through a travel agent, please contact them direct:

## W: [www.insidejapantours.com](http://www.insidejapantours.com)

## E: [info@insidejapantours.com](mailto:info@insidejapantours.com)

## Tel. UK: 0117 314 4620 Tel. USA: 1 303 952 0184

## For your local AiTO Specialist Travel Agent see: [www.aitoagents.com](http://www.aitoagents.com)

## Image credits

Please see [www.insidejapantours.com/brochure-images](http://www.insidejapantours.com/brochure-images) for full details of all the images used in our brochure.

## Average weather conditions

Japan is a fantastic destination all year round and the Japanese are very proud of their distinctive seasons. Traditionally, the most popular times of year to visit are spring (March/April) and autumn (October/November), when the weather is warm but not too humid and there is a good chance of seeing cherry blossom and the autumn leaves respectively (see opposite page for more details). However, every season has its unique charms and visiting out of season has many benefits, not least being the vastly smaller number of tourists at key sightseeing spots. Winter is characterised by crisp, clear days, with the mountains and the northern regions experiencing heavy snow fall. Summer is hot and more humid in the cities, but is the perfect time to explore the higher altitudes of the Japanese countryside.

## Average start of cherry blossom

The springtime cherry blossom is a fantastic time to be in Japan. The beauty of the blossoms aside, picnicking and partying under the sakura is a national institution. Below are the average start dates for cherry blossom. Note that full bloom is usually reached a few days after the start date and then lasts for a week or so.

City	Average Date	2007	2006	2005
Sapporo	5th May	4th May	8th May	10th May
Hakodate	3rd May	30th Apr	7th May	1st May
Sendai	12th Apr	6th Apr	13th Apr	14th Apr
Tokyo	28th Mar	20th Mar	21st Mar	31st Mar
Kanazawa	6th Apr	29th Mar	6th Apr	7th Apr
Kyoto	31st Mar	25th Mar	27th Mar	2nd Apr
Hiroshima	29th Mar	22nd Mar	22nd Mar	3rd Apr
Matsuyama	28th Mar	23rd Mar	24th Mar	1st Apr
Kumamoto	24th Mar	23rd Mar	20th Mar	1st Apr
Kagoshima	26th Mar	30th Mar	20th Mar	3rd Apr
Ishigaki	19th Jan	23rd Jan	13th Jan	19th Jan

## Average start of autumn leaves

The *koyo* leaf viewing season is the highlight of autumnal Japan and makes for some beautiful vistas especially in the national parks. On average you can see leaves at their best as follows:

Region	Autumn Leaves
Hokkaido	mid September to late October
Tokyo	mid November to early December
Nikko	mid October to mid November
Hakone	early to mid November
Kawaguchi-ko	late October to early November
Kyoto	mid November to early December
Shikoku	mid October to late November
Kyushu	mid October to early November

## Rainy season

From June to mid-July much of Japan experiences a mild rainy season while Okinawa is affected approximately one month earlier. Average start and finish dates are as follows:

Region	Start	End
Ishigaki	8th May	23rd Jun
Kagoshima	29th May	13th Jul
Osaka, Kyoto, Nara	6th Jun	19th Jul
Tokyo	8th Jun	20th Jul

Source: Japan Meteorological Agency

During the rainy season it does not rain every day and it is not always torrential. Hokkaido does not have a rainy season. Some sights are enhanced by the rain and are much quieter than during peak seasons. Cheap umbrellas are available from every convenience store should you be caught in a downpour.

City	Max. Temp	Min. Temp	Rainy Days	Rainfall	Sunshine
January					
Sapporo	-1 C (30F)	-8 C (18F)	18 d	111 mm	97 h
Tokyo	10 C (50F)	2 C (34F)	5 d	49 mm	181 h
Kyoto	9 C (49F)	3 C (37F)	5 d	44 mm	142 h
Fukuoka	10 C (50F)	3 C (38F)	9 d	72 mm	100 h
Ishigaki	19 C (66F)	14 C (58F)	11 d	115 mm	95 h
February					
Sapporo	0 C (32F)	-7 C (19F)	16 d	96 mm	110 h
Tokyo	10 C (50F)	2 C (36F)	6 d	60 mm	161 h
Kyoto	9 C (49F)	3 C (37F)	6 d	59 mm	131 h
Fukuoka	11 C (51F)	4 C (38F)	9 d	71 mm	114 h
Ishigaki	19 C (67F)	14 C (58F)	11 d	125 mm	85 h
March					
Sapporo	4 C (38F)	-4 C (26F)	14 d	80 mm	157 h
Tokyo	13 C (55F)	5 C (41F)	10 d	115 mm	160 h
Kyoto	13 C (56F)	5 C (41F)	9 d	100 mm	158 h
Fukuoka	14 C (57F)	6 C (43F)	11 d	109 mm	150 h
Ishigaki	21 C (70F)	16 C (61F)	12 d	160 mm	109 h
April					
Sapporo	11 C (52F)	3 C (37F)	9 d	61 mm	178 h
Tokyo	18 C (65F)	11 C (51F)	10 d	130 mm	165 h
Kyoto	20 C (67F)	11 C (51F)	10 d	121 mm	184 h
Fukuoka	19 C (67F)	11 C (51F)	10 d	125 mm	177 h
Ishigaki	24 C (75F)	19 C (66F)	11 d	181 mm	134 h
City	Max. Temp	Min. Temp	Rainy Days	Rainfall	Sunshine
May					
Sapporo	17 C (63F)	8 C (46F)	9 d	55 mm	197 h
Tokyo	23 C (73F)	15 C (59F)	10 d	128 mm	181 h
Kyoto	24 C (76F)	15 C (60F)	10 d	140 mm	200 h
Fukuoka	24 C (74F)	15 C (59F)	9 d	139 mm	181 h
Ishigaki	26 C (80F)	22 C (71F)	12 d	234 mm	150 h
June					
Sapporo	21 C (70F)	12 C (54F)	7 d	51 mm	187 h
Tokyo	25 C (77F)	19 C (66F)	12 d	165 mm	120 h
Kyoto	27 C (81F)	20 C (68F)	12 d	201 mm	150 h
Fukuoka	27 C (80F)	19 C (67F)	12 d	272 mm	148 h
Ishigaki	29 C (85F)	25 C (76F)	11 d	212 mm	182 h
July					
Sapporo	25 C (77F)	17 C (63F)	8 d	67 mm	176 h
Tokyo	29 C (84F)	23 C (73F)	10 d	162 mm	148 h
Kyoto	31 C (89F)	24 C (75F)	10 d	155 mm	186 h
Fukuoka	31 C (87F)	24 C (75F)	11 d	266 mm	183 h
Ishigaki	31 C (88F)	26 C (80F)	9 d	176 mm	243 h
August					
Sapporo	26 C (79F)	19 C (65F)	9 d	137 mm	174 h
Tokyo	31 C (87F)	24 C (76F)	8 d	155 mm	178 h
Kyoto	33 C (91F)	25 C (77F)	7 d	99 mm	211 h
Fukuoka	32 C (89F)	25 C (76F)	9 d	188 mm	199 h
Ishigaki	31 C (88F)	26 C (79F)	12 d	247 mm	223 h
City	Max. Temp	Min. Temp	Rainy Days	Rainfall	Sunshine
September					
Sapporo	22 C (79F)	14 C (65F)	10 d	138 mm	160 h
Tokyo	27 C (80F)	21 C (69F)	11 d	209 mm	113 h
Kyoto	29 C (84F)	21 C (70F)	10 d	175 mm	149 h
Fukuoka	28 C (82F)	21 C (69F)	10 d	175 mm	158 h
Ishigaki	30 C (88F)	25 C (79F)	10 d	200 mm	197 h
October					
Sapporo	16 C (60F)	7 C (44F)	12 d	124 mm	153 h
Tokyo	22 C (71F)	15 C (59F)	9 d	163 mm	130 h
Kyoto	23 C (73F)	15 C (59F)	8 d	109 mm	162 h
Fukuoka	23 C (73F)	15 C (59F)	7 d	81 mm	175 h
Ishigaki	28 C (82F)	23 C (73F)	8 d	163 mm	169 h
November					
Sapporo	8 C (47F)	1 C (34F)	14 d	103 mm	100 h
Tokyo	17 C (62F)	10 C (49F)	6 d	93 mm	141 h
Kyoto	17 C (63F)	10 C (49F)	6 d	66 mm	147 h
Fukuoka	18 C (64F)	10 C (49F)	8 d	81 mm	133 h
Ishigaki	24 C (76F)	20 C (67F)	9 d	124 mm	121 h
December					
Sapporo	2 C (36F)	-4 C (24F)	16 d	105 mm	87 h
Tokyo	12 C (54F)	5 C (40F)	4 d	40 mm	171 h
Kyoto	12 C (54F)	5 C (41F)	5 d	38 mm	149 h
Fukuoka	13 C (55F)	5 C (41F)	8 d	54 mm	117 h
Ishigaki	21 C (70F)	16 C (61F)	8 d	101 mm	114 h





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