



SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Best of Japan



15 Days / 14 Nights
Best of Japan

Tour Overview

More than any other country, the Japanese have managed to integrate ancient traditions and bleeding-edge technology harmoniously into their daily lives. With the perfect mix of new and old and our most popular itinerary, this well-rounded tour has something for everyone. In this excellent introduction to the Best of Japan, you won't miss anything the first-time visitor to Japan should see.

Destinations

Tokyo, Hakone, Nagoya, Takayama, Koya-san, Osaka, Himeji, Miyajima Island, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Fushimi, Tokyo (Optional Morning and Afternoon Food Tour), Nara (Optional Tour)

Tour Factors



Cultural Immersion



Pace



Physical Activity



Tour Details

In the Best of Japan tour, our most popular itinerary, you'll enjoy a colorful mix of large cities like Tokyo and Osaka, quaint and traditional Takayama, the ambiance and solitude of Miyajima Island, the religious center of Koya-san, the ancient shrines and temples of Kyoto, the testament to peace of Hiroshima, the natural beauty of Hakone, the thermally-heated mineral water baths at an onsen and much, much more.

You'll stay overnight at a mountaintop Buddhist temple where Buddhist monks will serve you meals of shojin ryori (the traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine), and you will attend prayer services at the temple early the next morning. Climb to the top of a samurai castle, participate in a tea ceremony, stroll through farmer's markets, meet a "maiko" (geisha-in-training) face-to-face, see where the geisha live and work, stay overnight on beautiful and quiet Miyajima Island, admire sacred Mt. Fuji (weather permitting), the icon of Japan and enjoy three gourmet Kaiseki-style dinners and one shojin-ryori Buddhist vegetarian meal, and much, much more.

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Overnight at Buddhist temple and morning prayer service
- ✓ "Meet a Maiko" session (a Maiko is a Geisha in training)
- ✓ Overnight on Miyajima Island
- ✓ Overnight at Onsen with naturally heated mineral waters
- ✓ Tea Ceremony
- ✓ Three "Kaiseki" style dinners
- ✓ 3 Shojin-ryori meals (Buddhist vegetarian)
- ✓ Seven separate rides on a Shinkansen (bullet train)
- ✓ Five overnights at a Japanese-style ryokan

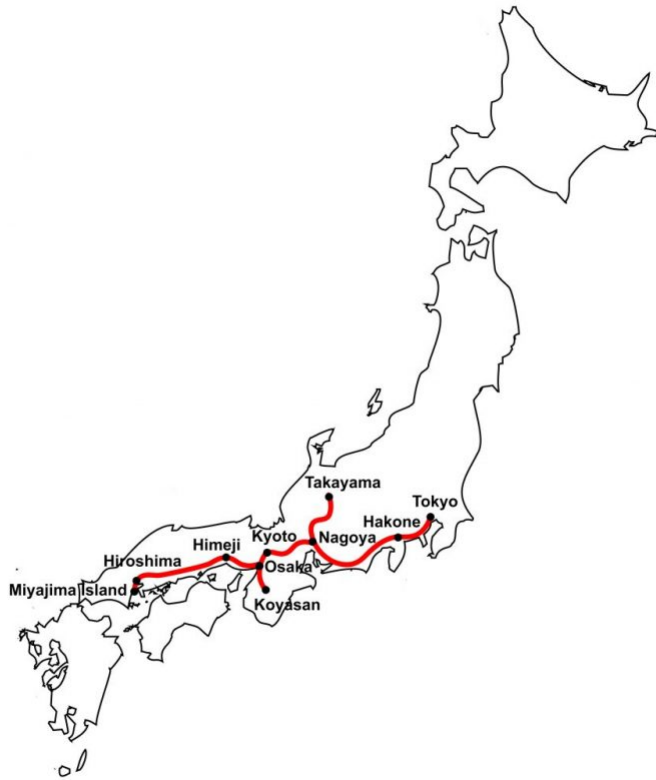
Tour Inclusions

- ✓ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only)
- ✓ 14 Day JR Rail Pass
- ✓ Meeting service at the arrival airport
- ✓ Sending service to the appropriate train station
- ✓ Baggage transfer from city to city
- ✓ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History

Tour Exclusions

- ✗ Airfare is NOT included.
- ✗ A printed itinerary is not included
- ✗ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map



Tour Destinations

- 📍 Tokyo
- 📍 Hakone
- 📍 Takayama
- 📍 Koya-san
- 📍 Osaka
- 📍 Himeji
- 📍 Miyajima Island
- 📍 Hiroshima
- 📍 Kyoto
- 📍 Nara (Optional)

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met at Tokyo's Narita Airport by a Samurai Tours meeting staff member. They will then purchase a limousine bus ticket for you and help you board the bus to the hotel. After checking in, the evening is free. No meals are included.

Travel: 1-1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 2 Tokyo - Tokyo Skytree, Ginza, Asakusa

After breakfast, you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. Next, the licensed, English-speaking guide will escort you to the Tokyo Skytree for a birds-eye view of Tokyo. Next we will travel to the nearby Asakusa area. Here we will tour the Nakamise-dori, Senso-ji Buddhist Temple and the Asakusa Shrine where you will learn about Buddhist and Shinto Japanese religious practices. Afterwards, we will travel to the famous Ginza district. The Ginza is recognized by many as one of the most luxurious shopping districts in the world, attracting visitors and regulars alike from across the globe. We will return to the accommodations, where we will go through the train tickets for the rest of the tour. Breakfast at the accommodations and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 3 Free Day in Tokyo

Today is a free day to enjoy the world-class city of Tokyo. Go shopping for that perfect souvenir, visit the Meiji Shrine dedicated to the Japanese emperor of the 19th century, or wander through the trendy Shibuya or Harajuku districts where you will more than likely see interesting and far-out fashions.

Day 4 Travel to Hakone; Tour Hakone - Hakone Ropeway, Hakone Lake Ashi Sightseeing Boats; Overnight at Hakone Yumoto Onsen

Before leaving Tokyo, you will prepare your luggage to be transferred to Takayama, and will be traveling to Hakone and Takayama with an overnight bag only. You will prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After breakfast, we will travel by Shinkansen (bullet train) to Hakone Yumoto Onsen, where we will stay overnight. Hakone is famous for its natural beauty and the view of nearby Mt. Fuji (weather permitting). We will be taking many different forms of transportation (electric train, funicular, gondola and bus) around Hakone including the Hakone Sightseeing Boats on Lake Ashi. In good weather, you can get an excellent view of Mount Fuji, and enjoy Hakone's rich scenery reflected on the lake's calm surface. After returning to Hakone Yumoto and picking up our overnight bags, we will check into the ryokan. Here you can enjoy the thermally-heated mineral baths at the ryokan. Breakfast at the hotel, lunch at a local Japanese restaurant and dinner at the ryokan are included.

PLEASE NOTE: High winds and/or heavy rain can, and will often cause cessation of services on the Sightseeing Boat cruise and/or ropeway. Should this occur, we will not be able to operate the itinerary as listed above, and will replace it with the best possible alternative given the weather conditions. Also, in the case of bad weather, even if the boats are still operating, we may alter the itinerary for your comfort and safety as Mt. Fuji will more than likely not be visible anyway.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 5 Travel to Takayama

After checking out, we will continue by Shinkansen (bullet train) and express train to the city of Takayama. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. Breakfast at the ryokan and a Kaiseki-style dinner will be served at the ryokan in the evening.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 6 Takayama - Miyagawa Morning Market, Jinyamae Morning Market, Takayama Jinya, San-machi-suji District, Free Afternoon

This morning we stroll through the farmer's market, sampling the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. After that, we tour the Takayama-jinya, the governing office of Takayama and the surrounding area since the early 17th century. The guide will take you to the San-machi-suji district, consisting of merchant homes dating back to the 16th century. From here the rest of the day is free to roam and explore Takayama. Visit the many temples, shrines and museums, rummage through antique shops, or relax at one of the sake breweries. The evening is free to enjoy one of the many nearby Hida Beef restaurants. (Hida Beef is the same thing as the more famous Kobe Beef.) Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: Medium

Day 7 Travel to Koya-san; Overnight at a Buddhist Temple

We will travel to Koya-san with overnight bags only. The rest of the luggage will be delivered to our hotel in Osaka where we will be staying the following night. You will need to prepare your overnight bags for 2 days and 1 night. We board an express train and Shinkansen bound for Osaka, and continue to Koya-san by subway, train and funicular. Koya-san is the world headquarters of the Shingon school of Esoteric Buddhism. Kobo Daishi, considered by many to be the most influential religious person in Japanese history, established a religious community here in the year 816. After checking into our shukubo (Buddhist temple lodging), you are free to roam and visit one of the 110 temples in the area or just rest in the garden at the shukubo. Your dinner of shojin-ryori (traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine - no meat, fish, onions or garlic) will be served by the Buddhist Monks from the temple. Breakfast at the ryokan and shojin-ryori dinner at the temple are included.

Travel: 7 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 8 Koya-san - Morning Prayer Service, Okunoin Cemetery and Temple, Garan Temple Complex; Travel to Osaka

Very early in the morning, we attend o-inori (Buddhist prayer service). Afterwards, a shojin-ryori breakfast is served. Following this meal, we wander through the huge cemetery leading up to the Okuno-in temple. Kobo Daishi is buried at this temple, and many Japanese still believe that Kobo Daishi is not dead, but merely in a very advanced state of meditation, waiting to awaken at the appropriate time. After touring the Garan Temple complex, we will stop for a Shojin-ryori lunch. After lunch we will return to the Namba Station the same way we came to Koyasan. After returning to Osaka and picking up our luggage and checking into our hotel, the evening is free to visit the Dotombori-dori and the Namba Districts (South Osaka), the nearby nightlife and restaurant district. While there, you can visit the Ebisu-bashi bridge, which will make you feel like you stepped into the movie "Blade Runner." Shojin-ryori breakfast at the temple and Shojin-ryori lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 9 Travel to Himeji; Tour Himeji - Himeji Castle, Koko-en Garden; Travel to Miyajima Island

Before leaving in the morning you will need to prepare your overnight bag for 3 days/2 nights and bring it with you to the lobby of the hotel. We will then travel by subway and Shinkansen to the city of Himeji. Here we will visit Himeji Castle. Built about 400 years ago, Himeji Castle is one of the largest and oldest original castles, and is one of only four castles designated as a national treasure and is also designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will continue on to Hiroshima by Shinkansen, where you will eat your bento box lunch previously purchased, and then a local train to the harbor where we will board a ferry for Miyajima Island. Miyajima Island is said by the Japanese to be one of the top three scenic places of Japan. The evening is free to enjoy the solitude and ambiance of the island after all of the day-trippers head back to the mainland. Breakfast, bento box lunch and kaiseki dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 10 Miyajima Island - Free Day

The entire day is free to enjoy and relax in the beauty and ambiance of Miyajima Island: ride the cable car to the top of the mountain on Miyajima Island, or visit the Itsukushima-jinja shrine which was built in its present form in 1168. Or just stroll around the island while enjoying grilled oysters and momiji manju (a popular Japanese confection), the island's specialty. Breakfast and kaiseki dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 11 Travel to Hiroshima; Tour Hiroshima - Peace Park and Museum; Travel to Kyoto

After taking the ferry and local train back to Hiroshima, we tour the Peace Memorial Museum and the Peace Memorial Park, which are both sobering monuments to the tragic events on August 6, 1945. Afterwards, we are off to Kyoto via the Shinkansen. Once in Kyoto, we pick up our luggage and check into our ryokan, where we stay for the remainder of the tour. Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 12 Kyoto - Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Nishiki Koji, Cultural Afternoon: Tea Ceremony

After breakfast, we will start the day at the Nijo Castle. Built in 1603, it was the Kyoto home of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa Shogun. The ostentatious style of construction was intended as a demonstration of Ieyasu's prestige, and to signal the demise of the emperor's power. The finest artists of the day filled the castle with delicate transom woodcarvings and paintings by the Kano School on sliding doors. One of the castle's most intriguing features is the so-called "nightingale" floors. To protect the Shogun from real or imagined enemies, these floorboards creak when stepped on. Next we will visit Kinkaku-ji. Kinkaku-ji, also known as the Golden Pavilion, is one of Kyoto's, as well as Japan's, most recognizable attractions. The gleaming building covered in gold leaf seems to float on the aptly named Mirror Pond, especially on a sunny day. After lunch you will have some free time at Nishiki Koji. Nishiki Koji is a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. Known as "Kyoto's Kitchen", this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce,

knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi. Following this free time, we will participate in an authentic tea ceremony. The regimented discipline of the tea ceremony has been practiced for more than 400 years, and at one time was considered mandatory for Samurai as an aid to train the mind. Later, we will return to the ryokan. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 13 Fushimi - Fushimi Inari Shrine; Kyoto - Higashiyama District, Yasaka Shrine, Gion Geisha District, Meet a Maiko Session

Before leaving for the day, you will need to prepare your main luggage to be sent forward to the airport. If you would prefer to keep your luggage, you can do so. If you will be sending the luggage, you will need to keep enough items for three days/two nights. The luggage transfer forms will have been provided to you prior to this day, and you are responsible for paying for this transfer. After breakfast, we are off by train to the nearby city of Fushimi, one of the largest sake producing regions of Japan. Here we will visit the Fushimi Inari shrine. This Shinto Shrine, established in the 8th century, is famous for the long tunnels of vermilion torii gates straddling a network of trails leading to the top of the heavily forested Mt. Inari. We will then travel to the Higashiyama District. This area of narrow, cobblestone alleys with its temples, shrines, numerous shops and restaurants is truly enjoyable and relaxing. We will stop for lunch in the Higashiyama District. We will then visit the Yasaka Shrine, also known as the Gion Shrine. This shrine, built over 1350 years ago, is one of the most famous shrines in Kyoto. The shrine's main hall combines the honden (inner sanctuary) and haiden (offering hall) into a single building. Next, we will walk to the famous Gion Geisha District. Here, you will see where the Geiko (in Kyoto they call themselves Geiko, not Geisha) and Maiko live and work. You may even see one on their way to one of their appointments. Next, we will have an opportunity to meet with a Maiko. The Maiko will perform a short dance, answer questions, and pose for photos with you. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a Japanese restaurant are included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 14 Kyoto - Free Day, Sayonara Dinner

The morning and afternoon are free. In the afternoon, we will meet back at the ryokan and travel to the Gion Geisha district. Here, in a teahouse, we will attend a Meet a Maiko session. (A Maiko is a Geisha in training.) She will perform a short dance, answer any of your questions and pose for pictures with you. After this we will have a walking tour of the Gion Geisha district. Here you will see where the Geisha and Maiko live and work. We may even see one on their way to their appointments. After this we will enjoy our Sayonara Dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local Japanese restaurant included.

Travel: 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 15 Return Home

It's time to say "sayonara" (Goodbye). The group will depart at 8:00 am unless we have determined you need to leave earlier (in which case you will not be provided sending service). You will be escorted to the Kyoto train station, where you will return on your own to Tokyo's Narita airport, Tokyo's Haneda airport or Osaka's Kansai airport by train. (If you are flying out of Narita or Haneda Airport, be sure to schedule a flight after 15:00 to allow yourself enough time to catch your flight.)

Retrieve your main luggage in the departure lobby of the airport (map in appendix)

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Walking level descriptions:

Light - 0 to 2 miles on level ground

Medium - 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground

Heavy - 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground

Dates & Pricing

| Dates | Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person) | Status |
|--|--|--|
| Sep 8, 2024 - Sep 22, 2024 4 Early Fall | \$5,665.00/ \$750.87 | Filling Fast! Only 3 seats left |
| Oct 6, 2024 - Oct 20, 2024 4 Late Fall | \$5,999.75/ \$750.87 | Full |
| Oct 13, 2024 - Oct 27, 2024 24 Fall Foliage #1 | \$6,129.53/ \$750.87 | Only 1 seat left |
| Oct 27, 2024 - Nov 10, 2024 24 Fall Foliage #1 | \$6,129.53/ \$750.87 | Only 1 seat left |
| Nov 3, 2024 - Nov 17, 2024 24 Fall Foliage #2 | \$6,128.50/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Mar 16, 2025 - Mar 30, 2025 25 Early Cherry Blossom #2 | \$6,489.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Mar 23, 2025 - Apr 6, 2025 5 Late Cherry Blossom #1 | \$6,746.50/ \$750.87 | Filling Fast! Only 4 seats left |
| Mar 30, 2025 - Apr 13, 2025 25 Late Cherry Blossom #2 | \$6,489.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| May 4, 2025 - May 18, 2025 25 Early Spring | \$5,999.75/ \$750.87 | Available |
| May 11, 2025 - May 25, 2025 025 Early Spring | \$5,999.75/ \$750.87 | Filling Fast! Only 4 seats left |
| Jun 8, 2025 - Jun 22, 2025 Late Spring | \$5,665.00/ \$750.87 | Available |

| Dates | Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person) | Status |
|--|--|---------------|
| Jun 22, 2025 - Jul 6, 2025 Summer | \$5,459.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Jul 6, 2025 - Jul 20, 2025 | \$5,459.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Jul 20, 2025 - Aug 3, 2025 | \$5,459.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Aug 17, 2025 - Aug 31, 2025 Late Summer | \$5,459.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Sep 7, 2025 - Sep 21, 2025 Early Fall | \$5,665.00/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Oct 5, 2025 - Oct 19, 2025 Late Fall | \$5,999.75/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Oct 12, 2025 - Oct 26, 2025 Fall Foliage #1 | \$6,129.53/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Oct 26, 2025 - Nov 9, 2025 Fall Foliage #1 | \$6,129.53/ \$750.87 | Available |
| Nov 2, 2025 - Nov 16, 2025 Fall Foliage #2 | \$6,128.50/ \$750.87 | Available |

Add-On Tours

Our tours and tour itineraries are the best, but as the saying goes, “you can’t make everyone happy all of the time”. There may a specific destination or a specific experience you may want to include in your visit to Japan that may not be included your tour. Choose from our Add On tours to include your interests and make your Japan tour even better.

Click [HERE](#) to view all of the Add-On Tours.

Or, use the arrows to scroll though the recommended list of Add-On Tours for this tour.



















Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a \$100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
 - Exact coverage dependent on state
 - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. FL, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
 - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
 - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
 - Up to 69 - \$0
 - 70-74 - \$100
 - 75-79 - \$200
 - 80-84 - \$350
 - 85+ - \$550
 - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a \$100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.
- Reserved seat train tickets where applicable
- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the ryokan in Tokyo
 - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the ryokan in Tokyo
 - Meeting service can only be provided between 6am and 9pm. If you arrive at a time outside of these hours, we will need to provide alternative directions for you to get to the ryokan on your own.
- Sending service to the Kyoto train station and transfer to Tokyo's Narita Airport, Tokyo's Haneda Airport or Osaka's Kansai Airport. (Transfers to Itami Airport are not included)
 - The sending service will escort you to the Kyoto train station and make sure you board the correct train. The sending service will not accompany you to the airport.

For those requiring meeting or sending services on other than the scheduled arrival/departure dates, there will be a \$100 fee for the meeting service from the airport into Tokyo or the sending service to the Kyoto train station.)

- Lodging for 14 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels
- Meals
 - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
 - Six Japanese-style lunches
 - Six Japanese-style dinners (including 3 gourmet kaiseki dinners at the ryokans, and a shojin-ryori - traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine - dinner at a Buddhist temple)
- The appropriate amount of free time to allow you to explore and discover your own personal Japan.
- All transportation costs when traveling with the group. (Transportation costs during scheduled

free times are the tour member's responsibility.)

- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right. (Itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Use of audio tour guide system (must provide own headphones)
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from the ryokan in Tokyo to the ryokan in Takayama (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from the ryokan in Takayama to the ryokan in Osaka (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from the ryokan in Osaka to the ryokan in Kyoto (one bag only)

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do's-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions

- Airfare is NOT included.
- A printed itinerary is not included
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at www.samuraitours.com/tours for the most current dates, prices and information.

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MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS

Better Business Bureau
American Society of Travel
Agents
National Tour Association
Japan National Tourist
Organization
JNTO-approved Japan Travel
Specialist