

Just Japan

8 days | Tokyo to Osaka



PRIVATE TOUR: Take in the buzz of Japan's capital city, learn how to prepare authentic Japanese cuisine, explore the mountainous landscapes of Hakone National Park, discover Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Kyoto and feed the deer at Nara Park on this classic Japan private tour.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Tokyo - Choose from exploring the historic district of Asakusa, cruising the Sumida River, strolling through Hamarikyu Gardens, discovering the fashion hub of Harajuku and taking in the bright lights of the Business District of Shinjuku
- Kyoto - Choose from visiting the Golden Pavillion Zen Temple of Kinakakuji, Kiyomizu Dera Temple, Higashiyama historic district, Fushimi Inari Shrine and Gion Geisha District
- Cooking Class - Learn how to prepare authentic Japanese cuisine with our hands on cooking class
- Hakone - Explore the Hakone National Park on mountain bus, railway, cable car or funicular railway. Cruise across Lake Ashi and

admire views of spectacular Mount Fuji

- Nara - Visit shrines and temples, explore Nara Park and feed the unabashed deer

What's Included

- Breakfast daily and 1 dinner
- 7 nights STANDARD hotels and ryokan. SUPERIOR and DELUXE hotel options are also available upon request. Accommodation rating - See Trip Notes for details
- Arrival transfer via shared public shuttle bus from Tokyo Airport
- Departure transfer via shared shuttle bus to Osaka Airport
- Full day of guided sightseeing in Tokyo
- Cooking class in Tokyo
- Full day of guided sightseeing in Kyoto
- IC Transport Card
- Train from Ueno to Odawara
- 2 day Hakone Freepass
- Train from Odawara to Kyoto
- Return train from Kyoto to Nara

What's Not Included

- Entrance Fees: USD\$45-60pp, paid locally in local currency
- International flights and visa

- Tipping - An entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Japan!

Welcome to Tokyo! You will be met upon arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport and escorted by shuttle bus to your hotel in the city. Please note that as other people will be in the same bus there may be a few stops before you arrive at your hotel (maximum of 3 other stops). Journey time is around 2 hours, and this is a comfortable and easy way to make today's transfer (hotel check in is generally after 14:00).

Look out for some great views as you ride the elevated highways into town and spend the rest of the day exploring the city at your own leisure. With its huge skyscrapers, underpasses, overpasses and crowds of pedestrians, Tokyo may not seem the most attractive city on the surface, but the city has a vibrant charm. The street level detail is what makes Tokyo such an incredibly interesting place to explore and at every turn you will be met with an array of sights, sounds and smells to enliven the senses.

Overnight - Tokyo

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updated on 05-12-2022 08:16:40

Just Japan

Day 2 : Tokyo – Asakusa & Senso-ji Temple



Tokyo – breakfast. Today enjoy a full day of guided sightseeing led by a local guide, offering a perfect introduction to the city. Travelling by public transport, as Tokyoites do, you will get a real feel for city life and your guide will help you discover aspects of Tokyo that you would not be able to find on your own. Rather than a fixed itinerary, you can enjoy the flexibility of seeing and doing exactly what you want.

Your guide will come to your hotel at around 9:00am (or any time you choose) to meet you and your day will proceed from there. Rather than fix an itinerary in advance, we like to give you the flexibility to see and do what takes your fancy. This means you will need to pay for your entrance fees on the day. You will also need to cover your local transport and that of the guide.

As a suggestion, you can start the day by visiting Asakusa, Tokyo's historic district. Here, you can browse the bustling marketplace of Nakamise Dori, visit the famous Senso-ji Temple and explore the backstreets lined with Kabuki theatres, rustic bars and restaurants. From Asakusa, you can take a river cruise on the Sumida River to the Hamarikyū Gardens, a peaceful oasis of greenery and exquisite Japanese aesthetics in the heart of a bustling city.

A short train journey from here can take you to Harajuku, the focal point for Tokyo's teen culture where you will find teenagers hanging out wearing quirky

and extreme fashions. Nearby you can also find Meiji Jingu, one of the most famous and important shrines in Tokyo. Then why not end the day surrounded by the bright lights of Shinjuku, Tokyo's main business and entertainment district. Spend the rest of the evening discovering the city on your own.

Your day of guiding will finish at around 5:00pm with the guide either dropping you back at your hotel or anywhere else in the city you wish to spend the evening.

Overnight – Tokyo (B)

Day 3 : Japanese cooking class

Today you will be learning about home cooked Japanese cuisine. By setting you up to cook, with a Japanese person at the local cultural centre. This hands-on experience is cultural as well as culinary. For some, Japanese cuisine has earned the reputation as being fussy, demanding the sourcing and preparation of complicated ingredients. Not so in the average Japanese household, where recipes are deceptively simple, can be recreated at speed and most importantly taste ever-so-good. On this cooking course, hosted in a group environment, you'll learn how to prepare a hearty Japanese lunch using easy-to-identify ingredients which you'll be able to make for your friends back in your home country.

After meeting your instructor at 11:45 at their nearest station, they will first take you to a local market and together you'll shop for fresh ingredients. You'll then head to a kitchen, where you'll be shown how to prepare a traditional Japanese meal including classic dishes such as sushi, tempura or teriyaki chicken which of course you can then enjoy for lunch. Vegetarian options are also available on request. The class takes place in the Yanaka area, a well-preserved and traditional district of Tokyo known for its artisans and craftspeople. The experience will end around 2pm.

Please be sure to let us know any dietary requirements that you have so that we can pass these on to your instructor in advance.

Overnight – Tokyo (B)

Day 4 : Tokyo to Hakone



Tokyo – Hakone – breakfast. This morning, make your own way to Tokyo Station where you will get the train to Odawara Station, the access point for the Hakone National Park. From Ueno station you will take the JR Yamanote Line train to Tokyo Station. The journey takes under 10 minutes and trains leave every 5 minutes. From Tokyo Station you will be riding on the Shinkansen for the 35 minute journey to Odawara Station, the access point for the Hakone National Park. We will be providing reserved seat tickets for this leg of your journey # sit back and relax!

Upon arrival at Odawara you will start using your 2 Day Hakone Freepass. The pass is valid for two days from today and entitles you to unlimited use of 6 different forms of transport in the Hakone region. These include the mountain buses and railway, one of the longest cable cars in Japan and a funicular railway as well as a pirate ship! which cruises across Lake Ashi. These all crisscross the region making it easy to explore and enjoy the surroundings as well as some of the many top-quality art museums. The pass also gives you small discounts at many attractions in the area so be sure to show your pass when purchasing tickets. And of course, if you are lucky with the weather, you will be rewarded with stunning views of Mount Fuji.

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Just Japan

From Odawara Station you will use your Hakone Freepass to take the bus up into the mountains of Hakone and on to your accommodation, the Ichinoyu Honkan. The road twists and turns as you head higher, passing through several small villages en#route. Spend the day exploring the region at your own pace.

Overnight - Hakone (B, D)

Day 5 : Hakone to Kyoto



Hakone - Kyoto - breakfast. Today you will travel to Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital and the cultural centre of the nation. From Odawara, the journey to Kyoto will see you racing down Japan's eastern seaboard by Shinkansen and takes 2 hours 10 minutes.

Kyoto is one of the most culturally rich cities in Asia. Home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, over 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, this ancient city showcases the heart and soul of traditional Japan. Spend the rest of the day at your own leisure exploring the city.

Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 6 : Sightseeing in Kyoto



Today, enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Kyoto, again travelling by public transport with a private guide.

Your guide will come to your accommodation at around 9:00am and take you on your tour that will encompass some of the more famous sights but also some lesser known places of interest. Today, there is no fixed itinerary and entrance fees and transport will be paid on the day (you'll also have to cover the guide's transport). This is to give you the maximum flexibility to enjoy each place in your own time.

With no fixed itinerary and a knowledgeable local at your side, you will be set for a great day in this amazing city and are sure to discover things you might otherwise miss. You may want to start your day at Kinkakuji - Kyoto's famous Golden Pavilion Zen Temple which is decorated with gold leaf and stands over a tranquil pond. From Kikakuji in the north of the city you can then head to Kiyomizu Dera Temple in the east. This impressive wooden structure is perched on a hillside surrounded by woodland and looks out across the city.

The afternoon could be spent at Fushimi Inari Shrine in the south of the city. This shrine's appeal is the thousands of red torii gates which create a network of pathways through the wooded forests of Mt Inari, linking the various buildings of the shrine together. You may want your guide to finish the day of sightseeing by taking you to the Gion Geisha District where if you are lucky you will be able to see a Geisha shuffling through the streets between appointments.

Your day of guiding will finish at around 5:00pm either back at your accommodation or anywhere else in the city you wish to spend the evening.

Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 7 : Kyoto to Nara



This morning, take the train to Nara, renowned for the wealth of its Buddhist and Shinto Heritage. Nara is just a 40 minutes ride on the local train from Kyoto and there are frequent departures throughout the day.

Nara was formerly the end of the Silk Road and it was for this reason the area which first saw Buddhist teaching making the transition across the ocean from China. The myriad of shrines and temples are all set against the backdrop of the low-lying mountains and in the midst of Nara Park, which is famously home to a vast population of pesky deer.

Return to Kyoto in the evening. There are regular trains between Nara and Kyoto running from early morning until late at night. Journey time is 40 minutes for the faster Miyako Express departures but can be up to 1h15 for the slower trains which stop at all the stations. The Miyako Express runs up until around 6pm.

Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 8 : Goodbye Japan!

Today your adventure in Japan comes to an end. A departure transfer by shuttle bus will take you to the airport to meet your onward travel.(B)

ACCOMMODATION

Highlighted below are some of the accommodation/ hotels which we frequently use on this tour. We reserve the right to substitute these stays to ones of a similar standard.

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Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel or start point and further arrival information.

Sunroute Plaza Shinjuku

Renovated in 2007, the chic Sunroute Plaza Shinjuku offers contemporary accommodation in Japan's capital. Guest rooms are tastefully furnished in a modern style with comfortable amenities. The hotel also offers a number of excellent dining options including the Villazza trattoria style restaurant and the Bar Ku Kon Shinjuku dining experience! Why not sip on a delicious cocktail by the crackling fire – a great way to spend the evening! Located in the west of the city – a short walk from Shinjuku train station.



Ichinoyu Honkan

Ichinoyu Honkan is rich in history dating back to 1630. The Ichinoyu holds true to the traditional values of service for which it is famed. The Ichinoyu has large communal baths for you to enjoy. The ryokan also has its own reasonably priced bar which is open from 3pm to midnight and is a great place in which to relax. All in all, the Ichinoyu Honkan is a great place to stay and an establishment with a significant history. Your stay includes breakfast and dinner both served in the hotel restaurant.



Hotel Vista Premio

Nestled in the heart of Kyoto just a short walk from the Gion District, the Hotel Vista Premio offers travellers a wonderful combination of comfort and convenience. Guest rooms are

contemporary in style with a few traditional aesthetic Japanese touches and all feature ensuite facilities with deep soaking bathtubs. The hotel benefits from two restaurants serving both local and international cuisine and complimentary WiFi is available in public areas.



BEFORE YOU GO

Transportation

When travelling with us to Japan on a Private Tour you will be met upon arrival at the airport and escorted by shuttle bus to your start hotel. While our tours do include a day of guided sightseeing in Tokyo and Kyoto, the remainder of your tour is independently led, meaning you will be responsible for getting from place to place.

Thankfully, transportation in Japan is modern, punctual and easy to use. And to help you get started you will be provided with various travel vouchers which will cover most of the journeys you will make during your stay in Japan. These will then need to be exchanged for actual tickets upon your arrival.

Exchanging your vouchers

You will need to exchange the vouchers for actual tickets after your arrival in Japan. We recommend making the exchange at a mainline station in Tokyo. Instructions on how and where to do this will be in the Japan Rail Pass pamphlet you will be provided with. Note that you will need to show your passport when you make the exchange, and when you make the exchange you will be asked to state the date you wish to start using the passes. Please note that many ticket offices do not open until 9 or 10am, so be sure to make the exchange in advance

if you plan on making an early start. Plus remember to check your Japan Rail Pass pamphlet received with the vouchers for specific ticket office opening hours.

Reserving a seat for your journey

You can make seat reservations for no extra charge using your Japan Rail ticket – simply apply at any JR ticket office or at the time you make the exchange. You can reserve seats whenever you like; days in advance, the day before each journey; even just turn up at the station a few minutes before the train departs (subject to availability) and you can reserve seats. If you like to be very organised you can even make all your seat reservations right at the start of your trip. You will not be penalised if you end up not using a reservation, though it is polite to turn the reservation in at a ticket office so that other people can use those seats. Alternatively, you can just turn up and travel in the unreserved seats carriage of any JR train.

Accommodation ratings

On our Private trips, you can often choose your style of accommodation. The price quoted on our website is reflective of the included accommodation, please see the “included” section on the first page of this document for details. Should you opt for an alternative hotel category, this will be confirmed in writing with the respective price on your invoice.

For further details about the indicative hotels, please see the “hotels” tab on our website. Here we rank hotel's in their respective country (REGIONAL CATEGORY) – but we also tell you how it ranks by Western standards (OUR CATEGORY).

STANDARD – Equates to a Western 3-star standard, always featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant.
SUPERIOR – Equates to a Western 4-star standard, featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant and often a swimming pool and/or a fitness centre.

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DELUXE – Equates to a Western 5-star standard, usually featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, excellent service and customer care.

LUXURY – Equates to a Western 5-star plus standard – the creme de la creme. Featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, this accommodation is a cut above the rest. Sheer opulence!

Japan Country Guide

Visas & passports

Visa requirements are subject to change and visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Japan.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book all services. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy at least one month prior to travel. For information about visas, head to www.onthegotours.com/Japan/Visas

Please note: If you plan to renew your passport between now and your departure date, please let us know as soon as possible. For booking your accommodation and transportation, we must have the details of the passport that you will be carrying with you on your trip.

Fitness & tour transportation

We utilise public transportation in Japan because it's modern, punctual and easy to use. Japan's bullet trains run at speeds of up to 320km/h so they're undoubtedly the quickest way to get around the country. Additionally,

we use buses, trains and our trusted feet for sightseeing within the cities. This provides a unique insight to how the locals do it and also means that we avoid heavy traffic and delays. We walk an average of 3.5–9km each day, with steps, slopes and often uneven ground at sites.

Please note: that there may be times when you may not get a seat and will need to stand for the duration of travel and that you will be required to carry your own luggage at stations.

With the above in mind, it makes a lot of sense to spend some time getting additional exercise in preparation for your holiday and to wear suitable footwear.

Entrance fees

On most of our packages, the entrance fees are not included in the price of your holiday, although reasonably priced. We collect the entrance fees at the Welcome Meeting on day 1 (the amount is noted under exclusions on the first page of this document). A breakdown of the entrance fee total is provided upon arrival. Entrance fees are payable in local currency – Japanese Yen (JPY).

Tipping

Tipping is an essential part of the culture. For a job well done, we would suggest for your tour guide: USD \$3–5 per traveller, for each day of sightseeing.

For any drivers or On The Go Representatives we'd recommend USD\$1–2 per traveller for each day of service. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Is this holiday right for you?

Travelling to far-flung corners of the earth often involves encountering lifestyles and conditions that are very different from what you are used to back home. As such it is important to come prepared for unusual situations,

local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect everything to go precisely as planned, as things can and do change in foreign countries. The people, customs, creed and languages are different from one region to the next.

Japan is a country of unparalleled contrasts, a destination where you'll be afforded plenty of unique encounters, and if you can travel with an open mind you will have a wonderful time here. In return, please remember to demonstrate sensitivity and respect for local customs.

Please visit www.onthegotours.com/Japan/Travel-tips-and-useful-info for local customs, currency, WiFi and other helpful information to prepare you for your holiday.

Health

You should seek medical advice for vaccinations and about medications before travelling. Water is safe to drink in all areas of Japan.

Some medication including the stimulant dexamphetamine (used to treat ADHD) and pseudoephedrine (found in some cold and flu tablets) are banned. There are strict rules on the import of medication, and what can be brought into the country for personal use, check if your medication is legal and find out if any quantity restrictions or certification requirements apply. Consult your doctor about alternatives well in advance of travel.

Packing

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit www.worldclimate.com

One medium sized suitcase is recommended for travel around Japan and you will also want to take a small backpack or day pack for daily use. This small backpack will also come in use when your main suitcase has been

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forwarded ahead, such as when visiting Lake Kawaguchi on our groups tours or when travelling from Kanazawa to Kyoto on our Cherry Blossom tour.

Make sure you pack comfortable shoes as an extended time will be spent on your feet – high heels are not a nifty way to travel through Japan! Also, shoes will often be taken off and put back on, so something that is easy to put on and off easily is best!

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Universal travel adaptor
- DEET based mosquito repellent/antihistamine cream
- First aid kit including Dioralyte
- Tour Voucher and a copy of your travel insurance policy, spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport
- Camera and charger – Japan is a photographer's dream!
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume, torch and money belt
- Either a rucksack or suitcase is suitable. A small daypack for your day-to-day needs

Own arrangements

If you have made your own arrangements for accommodation, trains, planes or further sightseeing etc. independent of your holiday with us, our guides are more than happy to offer general information about your new adventure and point you in the right direction. That said, our guides are unable to become involved with these arrangements, such as calling your hotel and speaking on your behalf, changing your reservation, or escorting you to your new location, as it puts them in a difficult situation if things do not go to plan.

Free Wi-Fi in Japan

There are three nationwide services that make connecting to free Wi-Fi hotspots easier:

Japan Connected-free Wi-Fi:

A smartphone app that unifies the registration process of over 150,000 free tourist hot-spots. Look for it in the AppStore, Google Play or visit the following link for more details:

<http://www.ntt-bp.net/jcfw/en.html>

Free Wi-Fi Passport:

Two weeks free access to approximately 400,000 Softbank hot-spots across Japan. To register, call a toll-free number from a foreign cellphone while connected to the Softbank roaming network. You are given to a password that can be used on up to five devices. Visit the following link for more details on how to sign up:

<http://www.softbank.jp/en/mobile/special/freewifi/en/>

Travel Japan Wi-Fi:

A smartphone app that provides two weeks free access to over 200,000 Wi2 hotspots in Japan. Look for it in the AppStore, Google Play or visit the following link for more details:

<https://japanfreewifi.com/>

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