Land of the Samurai
12 days | Tokyo to Osaka

On this wonderful 12 day group tour of Japan you’ll not only take in the highlights of Tokyo and Kyoto, but you’ll also have the opportunity to visit historic Hiroshima, Miyajima Island with its iconic Torii Gate and the towering Himeji Castle. What’s more, you’ll sample Japanese hospitality at a ryokan where you can bathe in natural hot springs.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights
- Tokyo - Sensoji Temple district and temple, Harajuku, Takeshita Street, Meiji Shrine and Shibuya Crossing
- Kamakura - Big Buddha Statue, Hokokuji Zen Temple and the Bamboo Forest with its delightful village atmosphere. Opt to take part in a traditional tea ceremony
- Lake Kawaguchi located within Fuji Hakone Izu National Park - Spectacular mountain scenery and views of famed Mt Fuji
- Staying in a ryokan - Sampling Japanese hospitality, bathing in natural hot springs, wearing a Samue (casual Kimono) and sleeping on a futon
- Kyoto - UNESCO Listed Nijo Castle, Sanjusagen-do Temple with its 1000 life-like statues and Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Temple)
- Kyoto - Walking tour of the renowned Geisha district (Gion), with its ancient cobbled streets, streams, bridges and quaint tea houses and the opportunity to see Geisha and Maiko en route to their next engagement
- UNESCO Listed Himeji Castle - The towering 6 story structure is the best preserved and largest of all the castles in Japan
- Hiroshima - Peace Park, Peace Memorial Museum, UNESCO Listed A-Bomb Dome and Children’s Peace Monument (with thousands of paper cranes from children around the world)
- Miyajima Island with its UNESCO Listed iconic Red Torii Gate (Itsukushima shrine) standing in the sea. Cable to the top of Mt Misen - The highest peak on Miyajima for spectacular views of the Seto Inland Sea, some 150 islands and Hiroshima

What’s Included
- 7 breakfasts and 1 Japanese dinner at the Lake Kawaguchi ryokan
- 11 nights 3 star accommodation (including 1 night at a traditional ryokan (Japanese Inn)
- Guided sightseeing and walking tours in Tokyo, Kamakura, Lake Kawaguchi, Kyoto, Himeji, Hiroshima and Miyajima Island
- Lake Kawaguchi and Mt Fuji - Kachikachi-yama Ropeway and Observatory. For tours staying at Lake Kawaguchi between 14 Apr – 28 May each year we’ll visit to the Fuji Shibazakura (Moss Phlox) Festival with Mt Fuji in the distance
- Ferry to Miyajima Island and cable car to the top of Mt Misen
- Escorted by a licensed English speaking Japanese tour guide until day 10
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1 (by train) from Narita or Haneda International Airport
- Departure transfer on day 12 (unescorted) - by train or bus from Kyoto Station to Osaka Airports (ITM and KIX)
- All transportation - buses, trains and rail passes (including Suica Swipe Card and Japan Rail Pass)
- Baggage forwarding service from Tokyo to Kyoto (one bag per person)
- Maximum Group size: 16 persons

What’s Not Included
- Entrance Fees: USD$40-50pp, paid locally in local currency
- International flights and visa
- If you are opting to pay the single supplement, allowing you the privacy of your own room on this tour, a single room will be provided for all nights with the exception of day 5 (at Lake Kawaguchi), where single rooms are not available. For
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this night you will be matched up with a fellow tour member of the same gender
• Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow USD$3-5 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

COVID SAFE GUIDE

ITINERARY

Day 1: Tokyo

Saturday. Arrive into either Narita or Haneda International Airport in Tokyo where you will be met by your guide. Travel by train into the city centre and check into your hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax or explore the sights. Overnight - Tokyo

Day 2: Tokyo - Senjoji Temple District, Harajuki & Shibuya

Today we explore the capital. First stop is Asakusa which is home to Sensoji, Tokyo’s first temple which was built in the 7th century. Around the temple, in the lively Sensoji District, there are lots of interesting souvenir and craft stalls for us explore. We head to Harajuku in the afternoon, which is where the young and fashionable Tokyoites hangout, with its trendy shops and cafes. Here we’ll visit the important Meiji Shrine where the emperor Meiji and his wife are enshrined. Our final stop of today is Shibuya Crossing, regarded as one of the busiest intersections in the world. The famed intersection has no less than 7 pedestrian crossings and when the lights turn red at this busy junction, they all turn red at the same time in every direction. Traffic stops completely and pedestrians surge into the intersection from all sides. Known as ‘the scramble’ it’s an amazing spectacle which we’ll watch from the second floor of Starbucks, located directly opposite.

This evening offers free time, though if travelling in January, May and September you might like spend the evening watching a Sumo tournament (bookings must be made in advance). See our Trip Notes for more information. Overnight - Tokyo

Day 3: Kamakura - Big Buddha

Tokyo - Kamakura - Tokyo. Today we visit Kamakura, which is just an hour from Tokyo by train. Kamakura was Japan’s first feudal capital and is renowned for its beautiful Zen temples and pristine coastline. We’ll visit the iconic bronze Big Buddha and the Hokokuji Zen Temple which has a picturesque bamboo garden where you can drink tea and learn about tea ceremony’s, before walking the cobbled shopping district - adorned with lovely locally made items, before returning to Japan’s bustling capital for the night. Tonight, we organise a Shabu Shabu (a traditional Japanese hot pot meal) if the majority of the group are interested. Overnight - Tokyo

Day 4: Tokyo Edo Museum & time to explore

Today, enjoy a guided tour of the Tokyo Edo Museum which focuses on the lifestyle and culture experienced by Tokyotees over the city’s 400-year history. The museum houses some of the city’s best original artefacts and replicas of Edo-era buildings and landmarks, along with several large-scale models. The remainder of the day offers free time for you further explore the city. Overnight - Tokyo

Day 5: Mt Fuji & Lake Kawaguchi

Tokyo - Lake Kawaguchi. This morning we travel by highway to Lake Kawaguchi, located in the Fuji Hakone Izu National Park. Our base is Lake Kawaguchi which boasts breathtaking scenery and unparalleled views of a snow-capped Mt Fuji most of the year. Whilst in the area we’ll travel on the Mount Fuji Panoramic Ropeway and visit the observatory. For tours staying at Lake Kawaguchi between 15 Apr – 28 May each year we’ll visit the Springtime Fuji Shibazakura (Phlox Moss) Festival, held at Motosu Lake, where the landscape is covered in a vibrant, hot pink moss with Fuji as the backdrop. Tonight, we stay in a traditional Japanese ryokan. At the ryokan, we’ll be served a traditional Japanese dinner and you can take a relaxing dip in the natural hot spring baths. Overnight - Lake Kawaguchi (D)

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This information has been compiled with care and good faith. They give an accurate illustration of the proposed arrangements for this holiday. Circumstances beyond our control such as changes in local conditions, inclement weather or other reasons could force us to make changes to this itinerary. Any costs shown are subject to change, though are an accurate reflection of costs at time of setting. Please also note that visa requirements are subject to change and are the responsibility of the traveller and not that of On The Go Tours.

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Day 6 : Kyoto - 1000 statues of Kannon & the Geisha District

Lake Kawaguchi – Kyoto. The area has some great hiking trails and early this morning you might like to opt for a hike along the foreshores of the lake. Travel by bus to Mishima, then bullet train to Kyoto - Japan’s ancient and cultural capital.

As one of the most culturally rich cities in Asia, Kyoto is home to an abundance of UNESCO World Heritage sites, Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Here, we enjoy a guided tour of Sanjusagen-do Temple famous for its statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. The one thousand life-size statues of Kannon are made of Japanese cypress clad in gold leaf. They stand in 10 rows of 50, each hand crafted and slightly different from the next. Late this afternoon we head to Gion, for a walking tour of this famous Geisha District. After, you may wish to hire a Kimono and walk the streets as many Japanese do or take part in a cooking lesson.

Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 7 : Kyoto - Nijo Castle, Golden Pavilion & free time

This morning we offer a guided tour of Nijo Castle, one of the city’s most impressive UNESCO sites. Built by the first Tokugawa shogun in 1603, the exquisite Nijo Castle is a wonderful example of Momoyama architecture. After, we visit Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion) a stunning Zen Buddhist temple, part of the Historic Monuments of the Ancient Kyoto World Heritage Site. The top two floors of the monument are completely covered in gold leaf. Set upon a small lake with landscaped gardens the large completely gilt structure is as impressive, as it is beautiful. Kinkakuji Temple continues to be one of Japan’s most visited temples.

This afternoon offers free time for you to relax or to further discover the many sights of Kyoto your own way. Consider visiting Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its winding path lined by thousands of bright red torii gates. Just a short train ride away from the main Kyoto Station, this must-see sight is free to visit and is open 24 hours a day. You might also wish to hire a Kimono and walk the streets as many Japanese do or take part in a cooking lesson.

Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 8 : Himeji Castle & Hiroshima

Kyoto - Himeji - Hiroshima. We travel by bullet train to Hiroshima today, stopping en route at Himeji to visit the UNESCO Listed Himeji Castle, nicknamed the White Egret due to its colour and elegant shape. Himeji is Japan’s best preserved and largest castle, known for its maze-like defences. After taking in the panoramic views from the top of its 6 story watch tower there is time to stroll the local Saturday market which often takes place here, before taking the bullet train to Hiroshima. The later part of this afternoon and evening offers free time.

Tonight, if you like baseball consider booking tickets to watch the Carp play. The Carp, Hiroshima’s beloved professional baseball players, play games at home between May - Oct at Mazda Stadium.

Overnight - Hiroshima (B)

Day 9 : Miyajima Island & Red Torii Gate

Located off the coast of Hiroshima is Miyajima Island, one of Japan’s most picturesque destinations. Today we take the ferry out to the island and see the dramatic red ‘floating’ Torii Gate at the revered Itsukushima-jinja Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Listed Site. The iconic gate seems to float on the water but at low tide can reached by foot. It stands 16 metres high and is made from camphor wood. As we explore the island we’ll see further Shinto shrines, towering pagodas and pavilions before soaking up the incredible views of the Seto Inland Sea, dozens of nearby islands and Hiroshima city from our cable car ride to the top of Mount Misen, the highest point of the island. Free time is offered before we return to Hiroshima for the night. Tonight, we’ll make a reservation for Okonomiyaki - a mix between a savoury pancake and omelette, a local speciality of Hiroshima. Okonomiyaki is always a fun night, its inexpensive and is washed down perfectly with a Asahi beer.

Note: From June 2019 the floating Torii Gate is undergoing renovations – please see the Trip Notes for further details.

Overnight - Hiroshima (B)
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Day 10 : Hiroshima Peace Park, Museum & Memorials

Hiroshima - Kyoto. Hiroshima is of course infamous for being the first site where one of two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan at the end World War II. This morning we visit Peace Park and Peace Park Museum which are a poignant reminder of Hiroshima’s tragic past. We’ll see the iconic A-Bomb Dome, one of the very few buildings left standing after the blast and visit the Children’s Peace Monument a memorial to the children killed, where schools from around the world donate paper origami cranes, signifying hope and peace.

This afternoon we take the bullet train to Kyoto. On the train we bid farewell to travellers on our 13 day tour who will continue with your guide to Takayama. Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 11 : Free time in Kyoto

A free day to spend a leisure in Kyoto. Independently exploring this enchanting city you’ll find sacred shrines tucked in among shopping arcades, time-honoured teahouses nestling among modern businesses and geisha in the historic Gion District. Alternatively, consider using your Japan Rail Pass for a day trip to Nara which has a myriad of shrines and temples, all set against the backdrop of the low lying mountains in the midst of Nara Park. Overnight - Kyoto (B)

Day 12 : Kyoto to Osaka

Wednesday. Kyoto - Osaka. Your Japan adventure comes to an end today. Take the train (un-escorted) from Kyoto Station to Osaka Airport for your onward flight. Please ensure you book your departing flight after 10am.

For information about visas, top travel tips and much more, take a look through our travel guide.(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard. Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Yaesu Terminal Hotel

Enjoying an enviable location on a cherry-blossom lined street in the centre of Tokyo, Yaesu Terminal Hotel is just a short jaunt away from the city’s main railroad station giving travellers easy access to locations across the city. A comfortable 3-star hotel with a natural theme, a permanent art exhibit in the hotel lobby and an in-house restaurant serving freshly prepared local cuisine; it is a soothing place to relax after a busy day of sightseeing. Hotel guests can make use of the free Wi-Fi, benefit from complimentary bathrobes and slippers and enjoy entertainment on a flat-screen TV.

Yamagishi Ryokan

With stunning views over Lake Kawaguchi, which is located just one minute away, the Yamagishi Ryokan is a gorgeous accommodation and an excellent base for exploring the area around the lake. Rooms are designed according to traditional Japanese styles with low furniture and lots of natural light. Breakfast and dinner are both included with the room and are served in the hotel’s dining room. After dinner, guests can take a dip in one of the hotel’s baths or relax with a coffee in the lounge. The hotel is located just an 8 minute walk from Kawaguchiko Station.

Hotel Mifujien

This Japanese-style hotel boasts stunning views over Lake Kawaguchi and Mount Fuji from each of its guestrooms. Offering traditional low furniture and modern amenities, each room is also equipped with air conditioning and a TV. The views can be enjoyed from the hotel’s lobby, tea lounge and the Japanese restaurant, which uses local ingredients and offers a feast of traditional dishes. On the 7th floor you’ll find both indoor and outdoor hot spring baths, perfect for unwinding at the end of the day.

Hotel Elcient Kyoto

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Boasting a fantastic location in the heart of Kyoto, Hotel Elcient Kyoto is within walking distance of top attractions such as Kyoto Tower and the picturesque Shosei-en Garden. Guestrooms are compact and simply furnished, complete with modern amenities such as air conditioning and ensuite bathrooms. Enjoy more than 30 different dishes at the Western and Japanese-style buffet-style restaurant, with light lunches and dinner also available. On the second floor you’ll find a large public bath and sauna, offering the perfect spot to relax after some sightseeing.

**Dormy Inn Premium Kyoto**

Located just a short walk from Kyoto Station and the lofty Kyoto Tower, you really cannot get more central than this! Combining convenience with comfort, this contemporary hotel boasts modern guest rooms with flat screen televisions, complimentary WiFi, refrigerators and a private toilet – though washing facilities are shared. Buffet breakfast is available, with a choice of local and western dishes on offer. The hotel is surrounded by a wide choice of shops and restaurants, adn there are plenty of cultural landmarks just a short stroll away. After a day of sightseeing guests can relax with a soak in the hotel’s natural hot spring baths or opt for a sauna and massage.

**Hokke Club**

Situated within walking distance of the Atomic Bomb Dome and Hiroshima Castle, Hokke Club Hotel boasts an excellent location. Guests can start their day with the European and Japanese-style breakfast buffet in the onsite restaurant, which is also open for lunch. Its modern guestrooms are well-equipped, with an electric kettle, fridge and air conditioning, alongside free WiFi access so you can stay connected with your friends and family back home. Treat yourself to a relaxing massage or enjoy a dip in the hot communal baths, a hotel feature that’s unique to Japanese culture.

**Candeo Hotel**

Recently opened in 2018, this modern hotel is conveniently located in the heart of the city just footsteps from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the Hiroshima Museum of Arts. Guestrooms are spacious and brightly lit, benefiting from free WiFi and tea and coffee making facilities. Guests can take advantage of the breakfast buffet, which offers 60 dishes ranging from continental to Japanese cuisine. However, this hotel’s real highlight is its SkySpa, which features a sauna, indoor and outdoor baths set on the rooftop.

**Daiwa Roynet**

The Daiwa Roynet is a great launching pad for exploring Hiroshima with a prime location and reliable service. The smart guestrooms feature free WiFi access and all the modcons needed for a comfortable stay. Dine on Japanese dishes at the hotel’s restaurant. Conveniently located in Hiroshima’s main commercial district, just a 1-minute walk from Chudenmae Tram Station and a 10-minute walk from the Peace Memorial Museum.

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**PRICES / DATES INFO**

Departure dates noted with a ‘G’ are guaranteed to operate. All other departure dates are guaranteed with a minimum of 4 persons. Prices shown are per person when there are 2 persons sharing a room. The 'Single supplement' is compulsory for solo travellers or if your booking party cannot reach the minimum of 2 persons in a room and the amount needs to be added to the per person price. The single supplement offers the comfort of your own room and is also available to any other person wanting their own room.

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