

INSIDE JAPAN

SMALL GROUP TOUR

Classic Japan (2027)

13 NIGHTS

CLASSIC



Tour overview

Imagine basking in a hot spring bath at the foot of Mount Fuji, drinking sake with an apprentice geisha in Kyoto or exploring tranquil gardens in the heart of the Tokyo metropolis. Classic Japan blends the country's famed "golden route" with the lesser-known beauty of its alpine heartland.

Discover some of the places that have given Japan its reputation as a land of mysterious spirituality and exquisite aesthetics, as you ride cross-country on the world-famous bullet train and stay in carefully selected three- and four-star accommodation.

In each destination, our Japan specialists have planned a range of experiences, from learning about the history of the magnificent Osaka Castle, to wandering through the thatched farmhouses of Takayama's Hida no Sato Folk Village.

In Kyoto, you'll be joined by a local expert guide for a tour of the city and have an exclusive audience with a trainee geisha (*maiko*). In Tokyo, you'll stroll through the calm and beautiful Hamarikyu Gardens, almost hidden in one of the capital's skyscraper districts.

Along the way you'll visit coastal Toyama, home to some of the best seafood in Japan, including the renowned Red Snow Crab (in season September-May). You'll have a chance to visit the neighbouring port town of Iwase, with its sake breweries, craft breweries and preserved merchant houses. You'll also visit the Fuji Hakone-Izu national park, where a backdrop view of Mount Fuji sets the scene for a pirate ship ride across Lake Ashi and the chance to try eggs boiled in volcanic hot springs.

Your journey will be gastronomic too – sample local specialities from melt-in-the-mouth Hida beef in the alpine regions to super-fresh sushi in Tokyo, quick bites from street vendors in Osaka and soba buckwheat noodles in Matsumoto.

Accompanying you throughout will be your tour leader (Insider), who will introduce history and culture, guide you on excursions, demystify the local etiquette and generally make sure you get the best from your Classic Japan tour.



Highlights

Get an introduction to feudal history at Osaka Castle

Wander among traditional thatched roof houses at UNESCO designated Gokayama village

Stroll in the peace of Tokyo's Hamarikyu Gardens

Explore Kyoto – the 'city of a thousand temples'

Relax in hot spring baths in Hakone

Meet a trainee geisha in Kyoto's Gion district

Explore the sake breweries and merchant houses of Iwase port town

Classic tours

Mid-range tours that cover Japan's classic sights or interest-specific itineraries (e.g. hiking, cultural activities, specific regions)

- Three / four-star accommodation
- En suite rooms in all locations (except at some unique traditional accommodation)
- Airport meet-and-greet and transfers
- Breakfast every day plus some lunches & dinners
- Selected entrance fees included
- Solo travellers: a single room is available throughout on payment of a mandatory supplement

Day by day

Many of our customers choose to arrive a day or two early to get over jet-lag and make the most out of the tour. We'll be happy to make arrangements to suit your needs.



Day 1 – Tokyo

On arrival in Tokyo, you'll be met by your driver, and travel by shared shuttle bus to your hotel in the Asakusa district.

Asakusa is the historic downtown and entertainment district of old Edo (as Tokyo was formerly known). This friendly area still maintains a traditional atmosphere and is home to Senso-ji, the city's oldest temple.

Tonight, the group will meet for our (included) first night dinner of your tour leader's choice.

Day 2 – Tokyo

We embark on a tour of the city today. As part of the tour we'll take a relaxing stroll through Hamarikyū, a tranquil Japanese garden of shogunate and Imperial significance. We can drink tea in the teahouse that serves as the centrepiece of the garden, where the Meiji Emperor used to take tea with Japanese and foreign dignitaries. From there, we'll head to the trendy Harajuku district to check out all of the latest crazy fashions, allowing for time to explore the forested grounds of Meiji Shrine. If exploring independently is more your thing, feel free to ask your tour leader for suggestions for the day.

Day 3 – Hakone

After having breakfast at our hotel we'll move on to Hakone. This tour includes a Hakone Free Pass, which allows you unlimited travel on all of the many modes of transport in the Hakone region: buses, funicular railway, cable car, and even the sightseeing "pirate" boat that crosses Lake Ashi. If we're lucky, clear skies will afford us stunning views of Mount Fuji. Then we'll visit the Open-Air Museum that features pieces by many world-renowned artists, such as Henry Moore and Picasso, set against a stunning mountain backdrop.

Our hotel has an extremely pleasant outdoor hot spring *rotenburo* bath, so you can relax after a hard day's sightseeing with a soak under the stars. Dinner is included at the hotel tonight.

Day 4 – Hakone

Today, you have more time to explore Hakone. You may like to take the funicular and ropeway up to Owakudani, where – weather permitting – you'll have clear views of Mount Fuji. From there, continue down to Lake Ashi and board a pirate ship to Hakone Machi. Other options include visiting the historic Sekisho checkpoint, strolling along the old Tokaido cedar avenue, or stopping by a local woodcraft shop to see Hakone's famous trick boxes. If you're feeling adventurous, take a short hike to Amazake Tea House, a 13th generation teahouse serving traditional sweet rice drinks and seasonal treats.

Day 5 – Osaka

After breakfast we'll be moving on to Osaka, taking a three-hour ride on the world-famous bullet train. Osaka is the modern pulse of the Kansai region, and home to some of the best food, drink and entertainment in all of Japan. The hotel is right in the centre of the city, and so perfectly placed for sightseeing. We'll head to the Osaka Castle this afternoon, to learn about the history behind this seemingly modern city.

Day 6 – Osaka

Take an excursion of your choice today. One popular destination is Nara, where you'll find the massive "Big Buddha" at Todai-ji temple, and roam the expansive parkland populated by friendly local deer. Alternatively, you could opt to visit Hiroshima to see the Peace Park and museum, and perhaps a visit to the nearby Miyajima Island. A third great option is Himeji, famous for its original castle. Your tour leader will be able to assist you with buying train tickets and making arrangements for wherever you choose to explore.

Of course, you may like to remain in Osaka to explore the city further. There is fantastic shopping, art museums, and an enormous proliferation of video game arcades and karaoke parlours to keep you busy if you do decide to stay. Tonight, make the most of Osaka's great food and night life!

Day 7 – Kyoto

We'll head off to Kyoto reasonably early this morning for a full day of sightseeing. Kyoto is a great city to explore on foot, and your Insider (tour leader) will shape your itinerary around the season, weather conditions, and of course the group's interests.

This afternoon we'll head to the Gion geisha district and visit a teahouse for afternoon tea with a trainee geisha (*maiko*). It's a truly unique and personal insight into their hidden world. Later we'll head out for an included meal at one of our favourite restaurants.

Day 8 – Kyoto

On day eight, we travel around Kyoto by private coach, accompanied by a local guide. The day includes a visit to Sanjusangendo, renowned for its remarkable hall housing 1,001 statues of Kannon. We'll have time to explore other sites of note across the city, and you'll finish the day with a better understanding of Kyoto's cultural and historical landscape.

Day 9 – Takayama

Today it's on by bullet and express trains to Takayama, arriving in the afternoon with enough time to start exploring the mountain town. Our hotel is just a short walk from the historic old town area, which is great for craft shops and *sake* breweries. Dinner will be included at a local restaurant in town this evening.

Day 10 – Takayama

Takayama is packed with things to see and do. Our top recommendation is the Hida-Takayama folk village. This fantastic outdoor museum is made up of a collection of old traditional-style houses from all around the Hida region. It's a chance to catch a glimpse of what rural life was like for ordinary folk before the industrial advancement of the new Meiji regime (1868).

Takayama's riverside morning market is filled with craft goods and local produce, such as fruit and pickles. In the afternoon you might like to check out some of the museums in the area or perhaps take a stroll among the beautiful shrines and temples. *Sake* tasting at a brewery is also a popular option!

Tonight, you may like to join your Insider for an optional dinner at a restaurant in town, and maybe even a drink or two at a local bar. *Kanpai!*

Day 11 – Toyama

After breakfast, we'll travel by private bus into the rural Toyama Prefecture, stopping en route in the UNESCO-designated Gokayama region. Our visit focuses on Ainokura Village, one of the best-preserved historic settlements in the area, known for its *Gassho zukuri* ("praying hands") farmhouses, with their steeply pitched thatched roofs. We'll step inside Iwaseke, the largest of such houses in Japan, offering a fascinating insight into traditional mountain life.

After an included lunch at a restaurant in the village, we'll visit the Folklore Museum, before taking part in a hands-on *washi*

papermaking experience using traditional techniques – a craft that has been practiced here for centuries. Later in the afternoon, we'll continue to Toyama City, where we'll check in to our hotel before an included dinner at a restaurant selected by your tour leader. Toyama's coastal location means that fresh, high-quality seafood will be on the menu.

Day 12 – Toyama

This morning, we'll head to central Toyama's waterfront and board a cruise travelling down river towards the coast. We'll disembark at Iwase, a beautifully preserved port district that once played an important role in the region's trade. Today, the area is known for its relaxed atmosphere, lined with small shops, cafés, *sake* breweries, and traditional sweet shops – it's a lovely spot to explore at leisure.

Mid-afternoon, we'll return to Toyama city centre by light rail. The remainder of the afternoon is free for you to explore, or relax, at your own pace – you may like to visit Toyama Castle. This evening is your free choice for dinner.

Day 13 – Tokyo

This morning we'll return to Tokyo by direct *Shinkansen* bullet train, arriving in just over two hours. The afternoon is free for any last-minute sightseeing, shopping, or simply soaking up the atmosphere of the city before the journey home.

As our tour draws to a close, we'll come together for an included farewell dinner. It's a final opportunity to enjoy good food and drink with your tour leader and fellow travellers, and to reflect on the experiences we've shared across Japan.

Day 14 – Sayonara

Alas, it's time to head home. A shared limousine bus service is included and will take you to the airport for your flight home.

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. You will be provided with Day-by-Day sheets and the tour leader will outline what they are going to do each day in detail. If you would like to break away from the group and do something different, they will be available to offer advice, and help you plan your day.

Where you'll stay

Please note that accommodation is subject to change. Final details of the accommodation will be included in your Info-Pack, which will be sent out approximately four weeks before departure. If you'd like to know more, please speak to your travel consultant.

● TOKYO

Asakusa View Annex Rokku

Asakusa View Hotel Annex Rokku is a modern, well-located hotel just a two minute walk from Asakusa Station. Just minutes from the iconic Kaminarimon gate, and well-connected by subway and train lines, it's a great base for exploring Tokyo further, too. Its rooms are comfortable, with all the essentials, and murals inspired by traditional Japanese theatre, such as Noh and Kabuki, decorate the hotel throughout. With a wide variety of restaurants nearby, dining options are never in short supply.

● HAKONE

Laforet Club Hakone Gora Yunosumikal

We're sure your stay at Laforet will be one of the highlights of your trip. This Japanese-style hotel is in one of the best locations in Hakone, close to Gora station which has links by cable car and mountain railway to the rest of the area. The rooms here are very generously sized with modern comforts like low beds, but with lovely Japanese design throughout. After a day of sightseeing, there's no better way to relax than by taking a soak in the communal hot spring baths with indoor and outdoor pools. We've included breakfast and dinner on both nights. Meals feature local seasonal ingredients and are served in the dining room with views out over the mountains of Hakone.

● OSAKA

Cross Hotel

The Cross Hotel is a smart hotel located in Dotonbori, one of the liveliest and most famous streets in all of Japan. The hotel has recently been refurbished with sleek, modern design both inside and out, giving it something of a boutique feel. Rooms are stylishly decorated and surprisingly generously sized for a city centre hotel, and each bathroom offers a deep soaking tub, separate shower and a small "powder room". The Cross has its own restaurant and bar, but its great location also means that there's plenty to choose from within a short walk.

What's included

- ⊙ Your comprehensive InsideJapan Info-Pack
- ⊙ Arrival and departure transfers by shared shuttle bus
- ⊙ IC transport card with 5,000 yen credit for city transport
- ⊙ Hakone Free Pass for local transport in Hakone
- ⊙ Full time services of your expert InsideJapan tour leader (Insider)
- ⊙ 13 nights' accommodation
- ⊙ Breakfast every day, seven evening meals and one lunch
- ⊙ Selected entrance fees and local transport at most destinations
- ⊙ Entrance to Osaka Castle
- ⊙ Audience with an apprentice geisha at a Kyoto teahouse
- ⊙ Full day private guide in Kyoto with private bus
- ⊙ Entrance to Takayama Hida Folk Village
- ⊙ Entrance to the Hakone Open-Air Museum
- ⊙ Entrance to Iwaseke House and Folklore Museum in Gokayama
- ⊙ Traditional paper making experience in Gokayama
- ⊙ Return trip to Iwase port town by river cruise and light rail from Toyama
- ⊙ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout the trip
- ⊙ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Osaka and from Takayama to Tokyo

Not included

- ⊗ International flights
- ⊗ Any local transport (subways, taxis, buses) unless covered by the included transport passes
- ⊗ Any entrances fees (including those for museums, temples and shrines) unless otherwise specified
- ⊗ Baggage handling and luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified – you will be expected to carry your own luggage

Where you'll stay

● KYOTO

Mitsui Garden Shinmachi Bettei

A small scale hotel located on a pretty backstreet just minutes from Shijo station. The hotel's wooden facade complete with *noren* curtains, gives the illusion of a traditional Kyoto townhouse. Inside, paper lanterns and screens at the windows are complemented by light, natural colours and local Nishijin kimono fabrics, reflecting the site's history as a former weaving museum.

The breakfast is a highlight, featuring a mix of Japanese and Japanese accented western dishes that change daily. After a busy day of sightseeing, you may also wish to take advantage of the hotel's gender segregated soothing public baths, available to staying guests at no extra cost.

● TAKAYAMA

Hotel Wood Takayama

A warm, minimalist hotel built in wood (as the name suggests) with a simple, yet serene Zen-inspired design. All rooms are furnished with Hida-style wooden decor and high-quality mattresses for a good night's sleep. Quiet relaxation is encouraged here – you won't find a TV in your room – but we recommend you try out the shared bathing facilities (gender segregated).

● TOYAMA

DoubleTree by Hilton Toyama

The DoubleTree by Hilton Toyama is a modern, well located hotel just a short walk from JR Toyama Station. It's a comfortable base for exploring both the city and the wider Toyama region. It's also close to Toyama Castle Park and several museums, each within walking distance.

The hotel features contemporary, understated interiors with clean lines and subtle design references inspired by the surrounding Tateyama mountain range. Rooms are spacious, offering a relaxing retreat after a day of sightseeing. Breakfast is served buffet style, with a wide selection of Japanese and Western dishes, including local Toyama specialties.

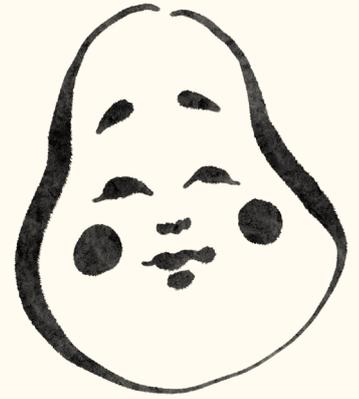
● TOKYO

Shinjuku Prince Hotel

The Shinjuku Prince Hotel is a modern hotel in the heart of Shinjuku, one of Tokyo's most lively shopping and entertainment districts. The hotel is well located for exploring the city, with excellent transport connections close by, including direct access to Seibu Shinjuku Station and easy links to JR and subway lines. Rooms are comfortable and simply styled, with en-suite bathrooms and essential amenities including air conditioning, free Wi-Fi and television. The hotel offers a range of facilities including several restaurants and cafés serving Japanese and Western cuisine, a bar/lounge area, coin-operated laundry facilities and a 24-hour front desk.



Important tour information



Fitness

Even when not using public transport, sightseeing in Japan often involves walking between sights, climbing up steps in temples and being 'on the go' for much of the day. To enjoy any of our Small Group Tours you should be of moderate fitness, able to walk and climb stairs without difficulty and able to maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

Dietary requirements

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know in advance if you have any special dietary requirements and we'll try to ensure that included meals meet these needs.

In addition, please note that dietary requirements (such as vegetarianism, gluten-free diets and even some allergies) are very uncommon in Japan so meals for those with specific requirements may be simpler and less varied.

En-suite / shared facilities

We aim to secure rooms at all accommodation with attached en-suite facilities. Culturally, communal bathing is common practice in Japan. Shared facilities (when included) will always be separated by gender.

Policy on single rooms

Single rooms are guaranteed at all night stops on this tour through payment of a mandatory single supplement.

Double rooms

Please note that in Japan, twin rooms are very much the norm, and there are far fewer double rooms available. Please understand that we will not be able to offer a double at any of the locations.

Your tour leader – Insider

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English speaker, now a resident of Japan and able to speak Japanese. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels and ryokan, so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time.

Your Insider is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace, yet they are available pretty much all day every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion!

Please note that the tour leader reserves the right to deny participation in an activity if they feel that it is in the safety or best interest of you and/or any other members of the group. Similarly, dangerous weather conditions may lead to cancellation of activities.

Luggage

We highly recommend that to make your stay more enjoyable you pack reasonably light. Large suitcases will be an inconvenience to you as you will have to carry your bags for short distances at times and some stations do not have escalators or elevators/lifts.

For ease of transit, we will be forwarding your luggage on two occasions and you will be without your main baggage for two nights in Hakone and two nights in Toyama.

You will need a small overnight bag (e.g. backpack) for use when we forward our main bags to the next location.

Transport on tour

Please note that most transfers are by public transport, making use of Japan's first-rate transport network. This tour uses a mixture of trains, taxis, public buses, boats, as well as private coaches for some transfers and sightseeing.

International flights

This tour starts and finishes in Tokyo for arrivals and departures at Narita or Haneda airport. Please note that the included meet-and-greet and airport transfer to the first hotel is ONLY available from these two airports.

Check-in

Upon arrival you will probably be tired after a long international flight. Please note that rooms at the Tokyo hotel are only available from 3pm.

Hotels in Japan operate strict check-in policies. If you have an early arrival you can either book an extra night for any-time check-in, or the hotel will be happy to securely store your luggage for you while you go for a drink or explore the local area.