









Historic Mountain Trails

13 Nights

Tokyo > Tsumago > Kamikochi > Matsumoto > Kyoto > Mt Fuji > Hakone

ESSENTIAL



-  Cruise through Tokyo on the Sumida River
-  Walk the ancient Nakasendo Highway between Tsumago and Magome
-  Visit Kamikochi National Park – one of the most beautiful places in Japan
-  Feel the thrill as you complete the challenging circuit hike at Mount Hotaka
-  Watch the sun rise from the summit of Mount Fuji
-  Enjoy a walking tour through Kyoto's *geisha* district and visit Hakone's Open Air Sculpture Park

IJT ESSENTIAL TOURS

Flexible, fast-paced tours. Just the basics included, keeping the cost down so you can choose how much you spend

Style Facts

- Two- to three-star accommodation
- En suite rooms in Western-style hotels, shared single-sex bathroom facilities in Japanese-style inns and mountain huts
- No airport transfers (but a city transport pass and detailed airport transfer instructions are provided)
- Breakfast every day plus one or two evening meals
- Entrance fees not included
- Carry your own luggage
- Solo travellers: a single room is available for no extra charge at Western-style hotels, but you will need to share with a member of the same sex in the Japanese-style inns

Please note that this is a challenging hiking tour - you will need to have recent hiking experience (preferably at altitudes of 3,000 m/9,800 ft) to take part. Be prepared for tough hikes covering distances of up to 20 km (12 mi), with early starts, snow patches, scrambling and steep ascents and descents.

Tour Overview

What better way to discover Japan's beautiful landscapes than to pull on your hiking boots and get out into the wilds? With plenty of modern and historic culture included for good measure, this is a physically challenging tour with fantastic rewards.

Though the focus of this trip is hiking, it wouldn't be doing justice to this fascinating country without considerable culture interspersed throughout. In Tokyo you'll find soaring peaks replaced with equally vertiginous architecture, and lush green forest supplanted by eye-popping neon. A tour of the city soaks up this buzzing energy, but we will find time to cruise peacefully up the Sumida River, dip into a teahouse and find a haven of green in Hamarikyu Gardens and at Meiji Shrine.

On the first hiking section of the tour you'll follow in the footsteps of samurai clans and pilgrims as you wind your way along the ancient Nakasendo Highway, passing through lush rice paddies, chatting with locals and cooling off under the glorious Otaki and Metaki waterfalls. Low-level wooden villages, rivers and forested peaks complete the scene, for an experience that takes you back in time.

In Kamikochi, an area of the Chubu Sangaku National Park, you'll hike through beech and birch forest, on rock and snow, scale towering, craggy peaks and stay in lodges by the pristine Azusa River and high on Mount Hotaka at 3,000 metres (9,800 ft)!

Glimpse Japan's traditional side in Kyoto as you gaze on grand temples, explore markets packed with delicacies, and perhaps even catch sight of a *geisha* as you walk through the wood-panelled streets of Gion. Even here, you're not too far from nature: Kyoto boasts some lovely forest trails and atmospheric bamboo groves. Most impressive of all, however, you'll climb one of the most famous peaks in the world: Mount Fuji. We run our tour to coincide with the Fuji climbing season, and as you reach your mountain hut at sundown, you'll marvel at the giant shadow that Fuji casts across the Kanto plain. Rising early, you'll complete your final ascent in time to watch the sunrise from the summit.

For an in-depth experience of rural and urban Japan with an expert tour leader, Historic Mountain Trails can't be beaten. Be prepared for tough hikes covering distances of up to 20 km (12 miles) with some scrambling. Technical mountaineering experience is not a prerequisite, but very good fitness and recent hillwalking experience are required.



Day by day

Day 1 – Tokyo (D)

Welcome to Japan! Your airport transfer is swift and easy and can be made with your included travel card. Don't worry, before you leave we will provide you with your personalised Info-Pack, which contains detailed instructions on how to arrive at the starting hotel safely (along with plenty of other information).

Our hotel is centrally located near Tokyo's famous Tokyo Tower. Close by, you will also find the atmospheric Zozo-ji Temple and street after street of restaurants, bars, cafés, and shops, all within walking distance of the hotel. There is certainly plenty to keep you occupied if you arrive early. We will have a group meeting in the evening, giving you the chance to meet your fellow group members and tour leader. Later you'll head out for a great included meal at one of the many fantastic restaurants nearby – the perfect way to get to know your group.

Day 2 Tokyo (B)

After a much-needed night's sleep there's no better

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way to tackle the jet lag than by getting stuck into a day of Tokyo sightseeing. Today your tour leader will be taking you all on a full-day tour of some of the city's most famous sights. These will include Meiji Shrine; a trip through the candy-coloured shopping district of Harajuku; a visit to Senso-ji Temple at the heart of traditional Asakusa; and a relaxing ride on the Sumida River cruise. If you prefer to explore the city under your own steam, feel free to break away from the group and discover some of the many other attractions. Tokyo has so much to offer!

Day 3 – Tsumago (B, D)

Today you'll be up bright and early to catch the bullet train to Nagoya, from which point you'll board an express train to the rural Kiso Valley. This area is home to the beautifully preserved post towns of Magome and Tsumago: former stations on the ancient Nakasendo Highway trade route that ran between Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and Kyoto.

This afternoon you'll make the leisurely, three to four-hour hike between the two villages, taking undulating paths through forest, rural hamlets and rice paddies. We'll be sure to stop off along the way, to cool off under the refreshing Otaki Waterfall. The residents of Magome and Tsumago have made a collective effort to preserve the historical atmosphere of the area, so the streets are lined with charming wooden buildings and rural shops – you will feel like you have stepped back into 18th-century Japan.

Tonight you'll be staying at a traditional *ryokan* inn, with a delicious multi-course dinner included and a chance to soak in some soothing hot spring baths, including a *rotenburo* – an outdoor tub with views of the surrounding hills.

Day 4 – Kamikochi (B,D)

As hard as it may be, you'll have to leave the relaxing ambience of our inn this morning. After an early breakfast we'll travel by train and bus to Kamikochi, one of the most spectacularly beautiful places in Japan, and arguably its best hiking area. Look out for the famous Japanese macaque monkeys rustling through the *sasa* bamboo as you begin the three-hour trail along the Azusa River and through the forest. After arrival at the delightfully located and pristinely presented Yokoo Sanso Mountain Lodge, dinner will be included tonight.

Day 5 – Kamikochi - Hotaka Ascent (B,D)

This morning we will be up early, straight to breakfast and on the trail before 7am, allowing plenty of time for the six- to eight-hour hike up to Hotaka Peak. This is a challenging hike that will see you tackle a great variety of terrain, from river walking, rocky stepped sections to snowfields (yes, even in summer, it's time to get the crampons out!) and ridges requiring scrambling – amid weather conditions that can change at the drop of a hat. Covering a vertical ascent of 1,500 m (4,900 ft), this exciting hike offers an incredible sense of achievement (and stupendous views!) for those who complete it. After the day's exertions you'll be rewarded with great food and warm hospitality at a mountain hut at 3,000 m (9,800 ft) where you'll have a chance to recharge your batteries for the day ahead, and mix with the local hikers around the fire.

Day 6 – Kamikochi - Descent from Hotaka (B,D)

A 5am we'll rise with the sun (hopefully), in order to reach Oku-Hotaka summit, Japan's third-highest peak at 3190 m (10,466 ft). From here you'll

follow the spectacular ridgeline to Mae-Hotaka Peak before dropping steeply down into the Dakesawa Valley, renowned for its glorious views. After making the tricky, eight- to ten-hour descent back down the mountain to the Azusa River nature trail, a hot bath, delicious meal and warm *futon* await at your riverside accommodation tonight. The views up the Dakesawa Valley are stupendous from here and merit an early evening stroll if you still have the energy!

Day 7 – Matsumoto (B)

Today you'll exchange the beautiful mountain scenery of Kamikochi for the city of Matsumoto, located on a plateau surrounded by the Japanese Alps. Matsumoto is most famous for its wonderfully preserved original samurai castle, nicknamed the "Black Crow". You can explore inside its main keep and enjoy the surrounding parkland, which draws locals and Japanese tourists alike. There is also an interesting city museum and a preserved merchants' quarter within five minutes' walk of your hotel.

Whilst in Matsumoto, art lovers may be interested in heading a little out of town to the *ukiyo-e* museum, which houses a collection of traditional woodblock prints by artists such as Hokusai, Hiroshige and Kitagawa. There are rarely any crowds here, so we highly recommend that you take the time to visit, learning also about the intricate process employed to produce these great works of art.

Day 8 – Kyoto (B, D)

This morning you'll speed by express and bullet train to Kyoto, Japan's cultural and historic heartland. Though your first experience of Kyoto will be the gigantic, steel-and-glass station complex – you'll soon discover that this is a city with an ancient heartbeat. You'll begin your cultural journey with a visit to Kiyomizu Temple, built on stilts and perched high on a hillside, with great views across the city. Later in the day you'll wander the traditional Gion district with a local expert, and learn about the secretive world of the *geisha*, before heading out for an included group meal at one of the city's excellent restaurants.

Day 9 – Kyoto (B)

Time to saddle up today. You are offered the opportunity to participate in a half-day cycling tour of Kyoto's famous and lesser-known haunts with a local guide and cycling enthusiast. The Silver Pavilion, Imperial Palace grounds, Heian Shrine – all are easily accessible now that you are on wheels! After lunch you'll wander through Nishiki food market to sample some of the weird and wonderful aspects of Kyoto cuisine. Those who fancy some greenery and a little exercise can then spend the afternoon with your tour leader, exploring the wooded hillside above Fushimi Inari Shrine, famed for its ten thousand *torii* gates.

Day 10 – Kyoto (B)

With a third and final day to spend in Kyoto, you'll have a great number of options to keep you busy. You might wish to stay in town in order to visit the Golden Pavilion at Kinkaku-ji Temple; or maybe take a traditional boat ride down the Hozugawa River. We recommend exploring the bamboo groves of Arashiyama, or spending your day perusing the city's museums and galleries. Ask your tour leader for more tips and ideas. You might even decide to go on a day trip to nearby Osaka or Nara, two fascinating and contrasting day trip destinations within a short train journey of Kyoto.

Day 11 Mt Fuji (B, D)

After forwarding your main luggage, you'll leave Japan's ancient capital behind and head eastwards by train to the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. Here you'll begin your ascent of Mount Fuji, Japan's highest peak at 3776 m (12,388 ft) by the lesser-trodden, greener Subashiri Trail. Be sure to take in the surrounding scenery and, if the weather is clear, marvel at Fuji's giant evening shadow as it stretches out across the Kanto plain. Today's hike will take five to six hours over loose scree and solidified lava trail, with considerable altitude gain and variable weather conditions. Your leader will be keeping a slow, steady pace throughout to ensure adjustment to high altitude. Tonight you'll be staying at one of Fuji's mountain huts, giving you the chance to eat a modest hot meal and rest before the early morning final push to the summit. Dinner will be included.

Day 12 – Hakone (B,D)

After a night in the mountain hut, and hopefully a restful sleep, you'll rise very early and climb up a further two hours, with hundreds of other eager hikers. The aim is to reach the summit just before daybreak – between 4:30 and 5am – ensuring a spectacular start to the day, if the sun shows itself! Following this, after some hot refreshments, you'll begin your three- to four-hour descent via the Subashiri Trail and catch the bus back to your accommodation in Hakone. If you have the energy, an afternoon visit to the world-class Hakone Open-Air Museum is highly recommended. Here you'll have the chance to wander amongst works by Miro, Picasso, Moore and Rodin, surrounded by the mountains and forests of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. Dinner will be included once again at your accommodation this evening, with hot spring bathing facilities available to soak away any aches.

Day 13 – Tokyo (B)

Today you'll hop aboard the mountain railway down to the fringes of the Hakone area, from where an express train will return us to the bustle of Tokyo in less than two hours. Back in the capital, this is your chance to do a bit of last-minute shopping and sightseeing, before you head out for a final dinner with your tour leader in the electric Shinjuku district of the city. This is the perfect way to reflect on the highlights of what will have been two weeks of adventure, personal challenge and team-orientated immersion in Japan's natural, urban and historic landscapes.

Day 14 – Tour Ends

Finally it's time to say *sayonara* to Japan. Your tour leader will ensure you have all the information you need to reach the airport in plenty of time for your flight home.

Accommodation

Shiba Park Hotel, Tokyo

The Shiba Park Hotel is a popular hotel in a great downtown location in Tokyo. The hotel is a short walk from Tokyo Tower and Zozo-ji Temple (we recommend visiting both whilst you are in Tokyo) as well as lots of restaurants. There is a nice park nearby you are also close to the waterfront for riverboats to Asakusa. The lobby has plenty of space and seating and the rooms are of a reasonable size for Tokyo. There are numerous subway and overland stations nearby and the hotel also has English speaking staff and its own restaurants, including a French restaurant operated by a Michelin-starred chef!



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WHAT'S INCLUDED

Fuki No Mori, Tsumago

The Fuki-no-Mori is a Japanese-style hotel located just outside Tsumago village. Unlike the inns in Tsumago, the rooms here all have full en suite facilities. Hot spring baths are available – both outdoor and indoor and, upon request, private hot spring baths can be reserved. There are spacious lounge areas in which to relax and enjoy the views. The hotel offers a free pick-up service from Nagiso Station. Breakfast is a delicious Japanese set menu.

Yokoo Sanso, Kamikochi

Yokoo Sanso Mountain Hut is located deep within the Kamikochi national park, about a three-hour walk from the visitors' centre. Accommodation here is in shared rooms with a maximum of eight people per room. There is a large Japanese-style bathhouse to enjoy, although soap cannot be used for environmental reasons. This recently refurbished lodge is an ideal base for mountain climbers and trekkers who are destined for Yariyatake Peak and the Hotaka Mountain Range. Breakfast is a set Japanese meal.

Hotaka Dake Sansou, Kamikochi

This mountain hut is located amid the stunning peaks of Mount Oku Hotaka and Mount Karesawa, at nearly 3,000 m (9,800 ft). On the way up, see if you can spot the red building amongst the magnificent mountains! Lodging is in shared rooms with fellow climbers and a hearty Japanese dinner is included. There is a small communal area with heating stove and a small shop where snacks can be bought. Breakfast is a set Japanese meal.

Gosenjaku Lodge, Kamikochi

The Gosenjaku Lodge sits in a low wooden building near Kappabashi Bridge in the centre of Kamikochi National Park. Rooms are simple Japanese-style, with *tatami* mat floors and *futon* bedding. None of the rooms have en-suite bathrooms, but there are shared communal baths. Included meals are buffets so you can help yourself to as much food as you like after a long day hiking in Kamikochi.

Hotel Kagetsu, Matsumoto

The Hotel Kagetsu has been a part of the fabric of Matsumoto for over a hundred years. Newly renovated the hotel retains an authentic Meiji-era atmosphere with lots of folk-craft furniture. The restaurant and cafe are very good - the Japanese-style breakfast is one of our favourites in Japan - it's enormous! The hotel has its own bath house as well as fully en-suite rooms.

Karasuma Kyoto Hotel, Kyoto

The hotel is in a great location, right in the heart of the city, a 5 minute walk from the shops and restaurants of the Kawaramachi district, with the famous Gion area a further 5 minutes' walk across the river. The hotel guestrooms are clean and comfortable, and though fairly compact they provide all the essential amenities. Hotel facilities include a restaurant, coffee shop, internet access in the lobby and plenty of English-speaking staff.

Goraikokan, Mount Fuji

During your Mount Fuji overnight climb you will be staying at the Goraikokan mountain hut, which is located just above the eighth station, 3,450 metres (11,300 ft) above sea level. The hut can be reached by the Yoshida or Subashiri hiking trails.

All of the mountain huts on Mount Fuji are very basic, with no showers or baths, and shared sleeping areas, but you will at least have somewhere to rest your head and recharge before reaching the summit. The hut contains bunk beds, a *futon* area and a sleeping bag area, which are all allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Your stay includes a simple dinner and breakfast.

Resorpia Hakone, Hakone

The Resorpia Hakone is a Japanese-style resort hotel based in the Gora area of Hakone, just a short walk away from Nakagora funicular station, the start of the cable car at Sounzan, and the Hakone Museum of Art. The hotel has hot spring baths, two restaurants, a swimming pool (summer only) and a games room. It is the perfect place to enjoy a relaxing setting after a hard climb up Mount Fuji. Breakfast is a generous choice of Japanese and Western-style buffet.

Ibis Tokyo Shinjuku, Tokyo

The Ibis Tokyo Shinjuku boasts an unbeatable location in the heart of Shinjuku, just minutes on foot from the station, with numerous restaurants and shops on its doorstep. The hotel has its own bar, cafe and restaurant and offers compact but clean and comfortable rooms. A handy coin laundry service is available and there is an internet computer in the lobby. This is a great base from which to explore the shops, bars and restaurants (and perhaps even a karaoke bar) of the exciting Shinjuku district. Just three minutes' walk from the hotel is Shinjuku Station, the busiest in the world, from where you can easily catch the subway to any district of Tokyo. Breakfast is a modest Western-style buffet.

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.

What's Included

- ✔ Your InsideJapan Tours Info-Pack
- ✔ All transportation between destinations in Japan
- ✔ IC transport card with 4,500 yen credit for city transport
- ✔ Full-time services of your InsideJapan tour leader
- ✔ 13 nights' accommodation
- ✔ Breakfast every day and eight evening meals
- ✔ Luggage forwarding from Kiso area to Matsumoto and from Kyoto to Hakone
- ✔ *Geisha* district walking tour in Kyoto
- ✔ Half-day cycling tour of Kyoto
- ✔ Mount Fuji mountain hut and transport arrangements
- ✔ Three-day Hakone Free Pass for transport in the Hakone area
- ✔ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout trip

NOT Included

- ✘ International flights
- ✘ Additional local transport unless covered by the included passes (in Tokyo and Hakone)
- ✘ Entrance fees including those for temples, shrines and museums
- ✘ Baggage handling and luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified

Practical notes

Please note that this is a challenging hiking tour - you will need to have a good level of fitness and have hillwalking experience (preferably at altitudes of more than 2,500 m/8,200 ft) to take part.

Travel Insurance:

Make sure that you do have coverage in your travel insurance for Helicopter Evacuation, or have it added. Rescue helicopter would be the only way to get badly injured people out of the higher areas of the Northern Alps, from where they are often flown to Matsumoto Hospital. As you can imagine, these costs are said to be very high, easily running into several thousands of pounds per hour, so it is imperative that you have the right insurance in place.

Transport and luggage:

Transfers are made by public transport or on foot. You will need one main bag, which can be either a large rucksack or a moderately sized suitcase. This bag will be sent from the Tsumago to Matsumoto. For your three nights in Kamikochi you will need to have a 50-litre rucksack for hiking (with space to hold at least two litres of water and hiking essentials such as fleeces, wet weather kit, hiking poles and snacks. A full kit list will be provided). A simple daypack is **not** sufficient for this hike.

Weather and clothing: The tour takes place in the summer and it will be hot in Tokyo and Kyoto (30C/86F+). However temperatures in the Japanese Alps and on Mount Fuji, can still drop to below zero degrees Celsius. You will need good outdoor wear and plenty of layers to stay warm and dry. You will also need to bring a mountaineering helmet, hiking boots, hiking poles and crampons to negotiate the snowfields we will encounter.

Accommodation:

The Western-style hotels all have full en suite facilities. Mountain huts and lodges have limited washing facilities. The other stays have shared (single sex) wash facilities. Rooming will be twin or single rooms at the Western-style hotels but at the mountain huts and lodges we will be using multi-occupancy rooms.

Please note that in Japan, Twin rooms are very much the norm, and there are far fewer Double rooms available. Please understand that even if you are being booked in a Double, this will only be in the hotels where there is availability.

Policy on single rooms:

There is no single supplement for this tour. Single travellers will have a single room free of charge at all of the western style hotels (at least 8 nights). They will be asked to share with another single traveller of the same sex at the Japanese style stays (maximum 5 nights).

International Flights:

This tour starts and finishes in Tokyo for arrivals and departures at Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda Airport.

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 12 noon. 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 whilst you go for a drink or explore the local area.

More tour information

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 will try to ensure that included meals meet these needs.

Visa requirements

Citizens of the UK, USA, CAN, AUS & NZ do not require an entry visa for Japan. If your home country is not listed here, please check with the Japanese embassy or consulate in your home country for information on visa requirements.

Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a native English speaker, now a resident of Japan and fluent in 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 tour leader is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace, yet s/he is 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 s/he feels that it is in the safety or best interest of you and/or any other members of the group (e.g. for any Mount Fuji climb, proper hiking gear and a reasonable level of fitness are required - both being generally assessed by the tour leader. Similarly, dangerous weather conditions may lead to cancellation of such an activity.)

Flexibility

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. Each morning the tour leader will outline what s/he is going to do that day, and if you would like to break away from the group and do something different, s/he will be available to give you advice, and help you plan your day.

Crime and personal safety

Japan is perhaps the world's safest country and personal crime is almost unheard-of. You are extremely unlikely to have anything stolen whilst you are in Japan and the likelihood of being threatened in any way is very small indeed. It is not uncommon to leave your wallet, phone, camera or laptop in a bar or restaurant and return hours later to find your lost property waiting for you. However, you should still take the usual precautions: keep large amounts of money out of sight and consider using a money belt; in your hotel room keep your valuables packed away and keep an eye on your bag and other personal effects when out and about.

Money & currency

What money to bring

The Japanese Yen is the currency in Japan, and you should make sure that you have access to plenty of it during your stay, as Japan is still very much a cash-based society. There are several different ways to get your hands on those precious yen and it is just a case of deciding which suits you best.

Obtaining money

Japanese yen in cash

Probably the best way to bring yen to Japan. You can purchase yen from most banks or in the UK from the post office. You can then be sure to arrive in Japan well-equipped with currency. Again, make sure you don't bring more than you plan on spending as you will have to pay to convert any leftovers into your home currency.

The best rates for obtaining yen are to be found online. In the UK try:

Thomas Exchange -

<https://www.thomasexchange.co.uk/>

Best Foreign Exchange -

<https://www.bestforeignexchange.com/services-foreign-currency-travel-money.php>

Foreign Currency in cash

You can bring your home currency in cash to change at the airport or at banks and post offices during the tour. You will get a better rate for travellers cheques at the airport than for cash. It is also much quicker to change cash at the post office than it is to change travellers cheques at a bank. However, not all post offices and banks offer this service so you can end up spending time trying to find one that does!

Credit / debit cards

Another convenient way to manage your money in Japan is to use your credit or debit card to withdraw cash from ATMs. Every post office in the country has an ATM that will accept your foreign issued cards. Please be aware that post office ATMs are usually only open business hours (8am to 6pm). More recently, the 24 hour convenience stores 7-Eleven and Family Mart will also accept the vast majority of foreign issued cards at their in-store ATMs. Just be sure that you know your four-digit PIN. It is advisable to notify your card issuer before you travel that you will be in Japan, to avoid the possibility that the transaction will be blocked for security reasons.

Travellers Cheques

You can change travellers cheques at banks across Japan as well as at the airport on arrival. However, it can be a time-consuming process so you could get travellers cheques **only if you intend to change all of them for yen at the airport** (where the exchange takes next to no time and you receive a better rate than for cash), or if you wish to keep them as emergency back-up. It is probably best to bring your travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling as you can change these anywhere. Euros, Australian Dollars, and

Canadian Dollars are also widely accepted. You can bring Japanese Yen travellers cheques but you will be hit with charges when you change them back to your home currency should you decide not to use them.

In conclusion, we suggest bringing a substantial amount of JPY in cash to Japan or changing a large amount of money at the airport. If you need more we suggest using your credit or debit card to make withdrawals from the post office ATMs.

How much money will I need?

This is the \$1000 question so to speak! Everybody spends a different amount when they visit. However, nearly everyone finds Japan a lot less expensive than they were expecting.

Eating out is very reasonable and as food is one of the biggest expenses (and pleasures!) when travelling, this helps keep costs down. Local transport, which is generally NOT included in our holiday packages, is also not expensive with the highest fare on the Tokyo subway being just 310 yen. Entrance fees to shrines, temples and museums are also very reasonable with most being in the region of 200-500 yen. Occasionally you will need to pay as much as 1000 yen but this is not the norm.

As a rough guide we recommend 80-100 thousand yen per person as a good amount to cover basic costs on a two-week trip. This should cover your meals, drinks, local transport and any entrance fees. What this won't cover are souvenirs and other purchases you may wish to make. Beer and drinks can also add up very quickly, so if you like a tittle of an evening you may need to budget a bit more.

Emergency funds

When travelling abroad, it is always advisable to have emergency funds tucked away somewhere in case of unexpected occurrences. In Japan this is not as much of an issue as in other parts of Asia, but it is perhaps best not to rely on your plastic for this money. We recommend keeping about £100 / \$200 of cash to one side for this purpose. This can be in your home currency or in yen, but make sure it is there and don't spend it! You never know when you might need those extra funds.

Exchange rates

20 years of zero inflation in Japan have helped Japan to remain a surprisingly affordable destination. Since the re-election of Prime Minister Abe, the exchange rate has become more favourable but continues to change frequently.

Exchange rates as of December 2017:

1 Australian Dollar AUD = 86 yen
1 British Pound GBP = 151 yen
1 Euro EUR = 133 yen
1 United States Dollar USD = 112 yen

Be sure to have a look at the rates before you travel as they can be quite volatile.

Tipping

As a rule there is no tipping in Japan. At restaurants you should not leave anything extra on top of the



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CONNECTIVITY

bill and you should not generally tip staff in hotels or taxi drivers. If you are staying in a high class *ryokan* then it is polite to tip your maid 1,000-2,000 yen on the day of arrival, but please give your tip in a discreet envelope. The same goes if you would like to tip a local guide – although a tip will not be expected and no offence will be taken if you do not give one.

If you feel that your tour leader has done a particularly good job, a tip will always be graciously accepted and appreciated. We recommend approximately 3,000 yen per person for a two-week tour.

EVERYDAY PRICES

Soft drink (Pepsi, Fanta etc)	130 yen
Loaf of bread	200 yen
Big Mac Meal	680 yen
Banana	100 yen
Litre of petrol	130 yen
Snickers	120 yen
500 ml can of beer	290 yen
Pint of beer in bar	(500-800 yen)
Shop sandwich	230 yen
Umbrella	500 yen
Newspaper	150 yen
Bottle of water	150 yen
Subway journey	160-310 yen
Taxi (per car for 2 km)	680 yen
Starbucks Tall Latte	370 yen
Entrance to a shrine/temple/museum - Usually between	200 yen and 600 yen

Lunch: Sit-down lunch around 1,000 yen, sandwich / onigiri / snacks from a convenience store around 500 yen. Beef bowl from Yoshinoya is 400 yen.

Dinner: Multi-course meal around 3,000 yen per person, bowl of noodles up to 1,000 yen per person, hot bento (box) dinner from a convenience store around 800 yen per person.

Of course, as in every country you can pay a LOT more for food if you like. Some restaurants in Tokyo and Kyoto will set you back as much as £250 / \$500 per person! However, if your tastes are not too extravagant then there is no reason to spend large sums on your meals.

Your tour leader will most likely visit restaurants where food costs average 1,500-2,000 yen.



Connectivity

Power and plugs

The voltage in Japan is 100V with two-pin, flat-blade plugs. Travellers from the USA will find that their plugs will fit into some Japanese sockets but not all. US appliances will work in Japan even though the voltage is slightly lower than North America. Travellers from the UK should purchase a plug adaptor before arrival in Japan as three pin adaptors are somewhat hard to find once you arrive. Please note that due to the much lower voltage UK electrical appliances (such as laptop computers) will not work unless they have a variable voltage power-pack.

Internet and Wi-Fi

In these days of Facebook, Twitter, smart phones and iPads, access to the internet and keeping in touch with friends and family online has become an important part of many people's holiday experience.

Free Wi-Fi is readily available in most hotels and *ryokan* in Japan. Some hotels only offer wired internet connections (not much help if you are trying to get online with your iPhone), but this is now more the exception than the norm.

There may be a couple of nights on your tour where internet is not available at the accommodation – especially if you are staying in a rural area. If you have concerns or want further details, feel free to call our office or talk to your tour leader. As of 2015, your tour leader will have a portable Wi-Fi unit that you will be able to request access to on railway journeys etc. Please note that this will be on a limited basis and NOT offered at the dinner table.

Pocket Wi-Fi

If you would like to have internet available for the duration of your trip you may like to consider hiring a "Pocket Wi-Fi" device. This is a smart phone-sized device which acts as a mobile wireless router. It fits comfortably into any pocket or handbag and creates a Wi-Fi zone with a reach of around ten metres. You can wirelessly connect up to ten devices simultaneously so even if you are a family of five all wielding your iPhones you can all still get online through a single Pocket Wi-Fi device.

Mobile coverage is very good in Japan, meaning you can have Wi-Fi internet with you almost

wherever you travel. Of course some rural areas might not have such a good signal but in the cities you will be connected all the time. Even on the *shinkansen* bullet train you will find you are online all the way.

If you want to guarantee mobile internet for the duration of your trip you should reserve in advance. PuPuRu offer a pocket Wi-Fi service. For more information and to book please visit: <https://pupuruwifi.com/en/>

Mobile phones

Many mobile phones will not work at all in Japan. However, if you have a 3G enabled handset and your phone contract includes "roaming", you will be able to use your mobile across most of Japan. If you do not have a suitable handset or wish to avoid high roaming charges, you may wish to hire a mobile for the duration of your stay. You can arrange phone rental on arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport, Tokyo Haneda Airport and Osaka Kansai Airport. Do note that phones are subject to availability and do sometimes run out at the busiest times of the year.

Alternatively, for our clients in North America we have teamed up with Travel Cell who provide rental cell phones which can be booked in advance: <http://www.travelcell.com/tcap.asp?ag=IJT28>

When placing an order either use the custom link above or please mention InsideJapan Tours code (IJT28).

For customers outside of North America, we have teamed up with PuPuRu mobile phone rental (PuPuRu also offer a pocket Wi-Fi service - see above). To hire a mobile please visit: <https://www.pupuru.com/en/service/>

Luggage

You will have to carry your own bags for most of the trip. Large cases WILL be an inconvenience to you and will slow down the whole group. A compact case WITH WHEELS or a good quality rucksack is appropriate for this tour. DO NOT bring holdalls or sports bags for your main luggage. If you are travelling for a long time (on a round-the-world ticket, for example), then make sure you have a smaller bag as well as your large bag. Japan has a superb system of luggage forwarding (*takuhaibin*) meaning there is no need to carry around all the items you have with you for a year-long trip! Instead you can forward them to your final hotel and they will be kept safely until you check in. The cost of this service is between 1,800 yen (for a medium-sized bag) up to 2,400 yen for a very large suitcase. There are no weight limits so you don't need to worry about this.

We highly recommend making use of the luggage forwarding service during your stay in Japan. For this reason we suggest you bring an overnight bag with you. This can be a smallish rucksack, a sports bag or any piece of luggage so long as it is not too big!

Packing Checklist

On this page you will find our packing checklist. This is not fully comprehensive but you should find nearly everything you could possibly need to bring on a trip to Japan! There are also a few things to keep in mind when packing.

Clothing and footwear

Comfortable, casual clothing is all that is required. Outside of business situations the Japanese are very relaxed about dress so formal attire is unnecessary. It is always possible that some of the nights outside might be cool or even cold so a jumper or fleece jacket and a light waterproof jacket are advisable. Every day you will be doing a fair amount of walking so a pair of good-quality, comfortable walking shoes is also recommended.

Documents

- ✓ Your passport!!
- ✓ A copy of your passport
- ✓ Credit cards
- ✓ Your travel insurance / health insurance documentation

The obvious things!

- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ T-shirts / polo shirts / casual shirts
- ✓ Two pairs of long trousers (jeans, cords, chinos etc)
- ✓ A pair of shorts
- ✓ Sun hat
- ✓ Warm hat (spring, autumn and winter)
- ✓ Light waterproof
- ✓ Light sweater (the air conditioning can be cold!)
- ✓ Night wear
- ✓ Fleece jacket, warm jumper or sweater (spring and autumn)
- ✓ Warm coat (winter only)
- ✓ Comfortable shoes or trainers
- ✓ Walking shoes / boots
- ✓ Open-toed sandals
- ✓ Small hand towel
- ✓ Swimwear (if you want to go to a public pool). Western ladies find it very hard to find swimwear to fit in Japan so it is best to bring your own!
- ✓ Day sack / small backpack
- ✓ Overnight bag

Toiletries / health products

Nearly all toiletries are widely available in Japan. However, many people prefer to use their own brands so you will need to bring these with you.

- ✓ Toothbrush, toothpaste
- ✓ Contact lens equipment or glasses
- ✓ Deodorant (most people do not like Japanese brands so be sure to bring your own!)
- ✓ Shower gel / Shampoo (these are provided at every night stop but you may prefer your own)
- ✓ Tampons and pads
- ✓ Mosquito repellent (summer)
- ✓ Sunscreen and after-sun cream
- ✓ Comb or brush
- ✓ Condoms or contraceptive pills
- ✓ Hair products (gel, spray etc)
- ✓ Lip balm
- ✓ Razor & shaving gel
- ✓ You may wish to take a well-stocked first aid kit containing bandages, plasters (band aids) and other similar products. In addition you may wish to bring: Pain killers (aspirin, paracetamol, ibuprofen etc) Motion sickness tablets

20 kg (44 lbs) max / 12 kg (26 lb) recommended

One main bag + one daybag + one overnight bag

Miscellaneous

- ✓ Paper / notebook (for writing your diary!)
- ✓ Pen / pencil
- ✓ Reading material - a good book never goes amiss!
- ✓ Earplugs (good on the plane and if you are sharing a room)
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Camera charger / spare camera batteries and memory card
- ✓ Inflatable travel pillow
- ✓ Phrase book or dictionary
- ✓ Laundry detergent (available in Japan but you may prefer your own brand)
- ✓ Plug converter (for recharging your digital camera)
- ✓ Umbrella - As it will likely rain over the course of your visit a folding umbrella can be useful. However, please note that these are available everywhere in Japan for a very low cost.

You do NOT need

- ✗ **A large towel** - towels are provided at all night stops on our itineraries
- ✗ **Films** - for those purists still using film cameras you can buy extra film for far less in Japan than in the UK or USA, though it is getting ever more difficult to find
- ✗ **Regular batteries** - all standard battery sizes are available to buy in convenience stores for UK prices
- ✗ **A hair dryer** - these are provided at nearly all night stops. Hair dryers brought from the UK will generally not work due to the lower voltage in Japan



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Climate

Japan has four distinct seasons with winter being cold but dry, spring warm with regular rainy days, summer very hot and humid and autumn warm and wet for the first few weeks and dry towards the end. There is also the risk of typhoons from July through to around the middle of October.

Below, you can find a chart of the average temperatures in Tokyo through the year. This is a good indicator of the kind of temperatures you can expect to experience during your trip. However, Japan is a geographically a very diverse country and this does have an effect on the temperature. Kyushu Island and the western regions of Honshu Island can be quite a lot hotter than Tokyo.

The reverse goes for the northern regions of the country which can get a lot colder than Tokyo. Much of Japan is mountainous and, of course, the higher in elevation you go, the colder it gets! Temperatures in Hokkaido can reach as low as -25°C in winter with very heavy snowfall. The same goes for the Japan Alps and other mountainous regions of Japan. Be sure to take all this into account when packing for your trip. If you are heading up into the mountains you will need warmer clothing. Even in summer the temperatures can drop quite low during the night.

You can be pretty sure that it will rain during your stay in Japan! In fact the average rainfall is nearly double that of the UK so it really does rain a lot, although in a far more concentrated manner. The wettest month of the year is September. However, this is mainly because of typhoons dumping huge amounts of rain in very short spaces of time, so you do get several dry days as well as the very rainy ones! The rainy season in Tokyo officially begins on 8th June and runs through until 20th July. However, the period of heaviest rain tends to be the last week in June and the first week in July. As with all these things though, exactly how much rain will fall in rainy season is very hard to predict and some years you really wouldn't know it was the rainy season at all!

City	Average High	Average Low	Rainy Days	Sunny Days
January				
Sapporo	-1°C / 30°F	-8°C / 18°F	60%	40%
Tokyo	10°C / 50°F	2°C / 36°F	15%	75%
Kyoto	9°C / 48°F	3°C / 37°F	20%	60%
Fukuoka	10°C / 50°F	3°C / 37°F	25%	40%
Ishigaki	19°C / 66°F	14°C / 57°F	35%	35%
February				
Sapporo	0°C / 32°F	-7°C / 19°F	55%	45%
Tokyo	10°C / 50°F	2°C / 36°F	15%	70%
Kyoto	9°C / 48°F	3°C / 37°F	15%	60%
Fukuoka	11°C / 52°F	4°C / 39°F	25%	55%
Ishigaki	19°C / 66°F	14°C / 57°F	35%	30%
March				
Sapporo	4°C / 39°F	-4°C / 25°F	50%	55%
Tokyo	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	25%	60%
Kyoto	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	30%	60%
Fukuoka	14°C / 57°F	6°C / 43°F	35%	50%
Ishigaki	21°C / 70°F	16°C / 61°F	35%	40%
April				
Sapporo	11°C / 52°F	3°C / 37°F	30%	55%
Tokyo	18°C / 64°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	55%
Kyoto	20°C / 68°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	60%
Fukuoka	19°C / 66°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	55%
Ishigaki	24°C / 65°F	19°C / 66°F	40%	35%
May				
Sapporo	17°C / 63°F	8°C / 46°F	30%	55%
Tokyo	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	50%
Kyoto	24°C / 75°F	15°C / 59°F	35%	60%
Fukuoka	24°C / 75°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	55%
Ishigaki	26°C / 79°F	22°C / 72°F	30%	45%
June				
Sapporo	21°C / 70°F	12°C / 54°F	25%	55%
Tokyo	25°C / 77°F	19°C / 66°F	35%	45%
Kyoto	27°C / 81°F	20°C / 68°F	30%	55%
Fukuoka	27°C / 81°F	19°C / 66°F	25%	55%
Ishigaki	29°C / 84°F	25°C / 77°F	45%	40%
July				
Sapporo	25°C / 77°F	17°C / 63°F	25%	40%
Tokyo	29°C / 84°F	23°C / 73°F	35%	30%
Kyoto	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	40%	45%
Fukuoka	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	40%	40%
Ishigaki	31°C / 88°F	26°C / 79°F	25%	80%
August				
Sapporo	26°C / 79°F	19°C / 66°F	25%	50%
Tokyo	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	25%	55%
Kyoto	33°C / 91°F	25°C / 77°F	20%	70%
Fukuoka	32°C / 90°F	25°C / 77°F	25%	65%
Ishigaki	31°C / 88°F	26°C / 79°F	40%	70%
September				
Sapporo	22°C / 72°F	14°C / 57°F	30%	50%
Tokyo	27°C / 81°F	21°C / 70°F	35%	40%
Kyoto	29°C / 84°F	21°C / 70°F	30%	60%
Fukuoka	28°C / 82°F	21°C / 70°F	35%	55%
Ishigaki	30°C / 86°F	25°C / 77°F	35%	70%
October				
Sapporo	16°C / 62°F	7°C / 45°F	35%	60%
Tokyo	22°C / 72°F	15°C / 59°F	35%	40%
Kyoto	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	55%
Fukuoka	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	20%	60%
Ishigaki	28°C / 82°F	23°C / 73°F	25%	65%
November				
Sapporo	8°C / 46°F	1°C / 34°F	45%	40%
Tokyo	17°C / 63°F	10°C / 50°F	25%	55%
Kyoto	17°C / 63°F	10°C / 50°F	20%	60%
Fukuoka	18°C / 64°F	10°C / 50°F	30%	55%
Ishigaki	24°C / 75°F	20°C / 68°F	25%	55%
December				
Sapporo	2°C / 36°F	-4°C / 25°F	50%	35%
Tokyo	12°C / 54°F	5°C / 41°F	15%	65%
Kyoto	12°C / 54°F	5°C / 41°F	20%	65%
Fukuoka	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	30%	45%
Ishigaki	21°C / 70°F	16°C / 61°F	25%	45%



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