









Japan Enchantment

14 Nights

Tokyo ▶ Nikko ▶ Karuizawa ▶ Nagano ▶ Kanazawa ▶ Kyoto ▶ Hakone ▶ Tokyo

SUPERIOR

INSIDE
Japan

-  Stroll around Kyoto's Gion district followed by an exclusive audience with a trainee geisha.
-  See flying squirrels in their natural habitat in rural Karuizawa
-  Enjoy a *soba* noodle-making class in one of Japan's finest mountain resorts
-  Discover the cultural centres and World Heritage Sites of Tokyo, Nikko, Karuizawa and Kanazawa
-  See the famous *onsen*-bathing "snow monkeys" of Yudanaka.
-  Balance activity and relaxation in luxury surroundings in verdant Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park.

IJT SUPERIOR TOURS

High-quality accommodation, several meals & entrance fees included, in-depth cultural immersion

Style facts

- Local professional guides in key destinations (in addition to your tour leader)
- Some private minibus transfers where beneficial
- Four- to five-star accommodation
- En suite rooms in all locations
- Private airport transfers
- Breakfast every day plus several lunches and dinners
- Most entrance fees included
- Selected luggage forwarding included
- Solo travellers: a single room is available throughout on payment of a mandatory supplement

Tour Overview

Japan Enchantment is the perfect introduction to a fascinating culture often considered impenetrable by the outside world.

You'll begin and end the trip in Tokyo, icon of high modernity and a city of bewildering size and scope. Your first dinner at a local restaurant will provide you with a relaxed yet invaluable introduction to Japanese food and etiquette, and is the perfect way to get to know your tour leader and group.

In thickly forested Nikko you'll be privy to the most lavish religious architecture in all of Japan, whilst in Karuizawa, you'll take a *soba* noodle-making class in a traditional rural Japanese restaurant. You won't fail to appreciate the pristine mountain air and leafy surroundings of your hotel, in one of the country's most exclusive resorts.

The cities of Kanazawa and Nagano offer yet more remarkable variety. Nestled beneath the Japanese Alps, Nagano is your gateway to the famous *onsen*-bathing snow monkeys of Yudanaka. Kanazawa offers beautifully preserved samurai residential districts, one of the very best Japanese gardens and a plethora of traditional craft workshops.

Kyoto is, for many, Japan's greatest city - imperial capital for over a thousand years and packed with architectural and cultural treasures. One highlight of your stay here is definitely your private audience with a *maiko* (trainee geisha). Such opportunities are rarely available to foreigners, giving you an exclusive window into this mysterious and captivating profession.

Complementing the city stays, you'll also get a tantalising taste of rural Japan. In the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park you'll cruise across Lake Ashi under the watchful gaze of Mount Fuji, and explore the outstanding Open-Air Sculpture Park, where you can soak and relax the feet in volcanic hot spring baths.

Day by day

Day 1 – Tokyo (D)

Today you will touch down in Tokyo, Japan's capital and the tenth most populous city in the world. On arrival in Tokyo, you'll be met by your driver and make your way by private car to the hotel in the traditional Asakusa district of the city, where our IJT tour leader will be waiting to welcome you in the lobby. This evening, you will join the group for an orientation meeting before heading out to one of



the area's excellent restaurants for a first-night meal – a great introduction to Japanese food and dining etiquette.

Day 2 Tokyo (B)

On day two, you will be joined by an expert InsideJapan guide, in addition to your tour leader. Your guide is a Tokyo local with a great knowledge of the area; (s)he and your tour leader will be able to give you a fantastic depth of insight into the famous landmarks and lesser-known spots you'll be visiting today. Included is a boat ride on the Sumida River, concluding with a cup of traditional green tea in the lovely Hamarikyu Gardens – the grounds of a former residence of successive Tokugawa Shoguns, and a real oasis amongst the skyscrapers.

You will then head to the west side of the capital, to Harajuku, where the extensive precincts of Imperial Meiji Shrine are to be found just across the tracks from the latest in Japanese youth fashion district. This area is a classic example of the juxtaposition of traditional and modern in Tokyo. The tour will end in the late afternoon, when you will have the choice of either heading back to the hotel with your tour leader, or further immersing yourself in the lively districts of west Tokyo. Dinner is not included tonight, but with hundreds of restaurant options around your hotel,



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you certainly won't go hungry. If unsure, ask your tour leader for ideas!

Day 3 Nikko (B, D)

Today you will explore the dazzling temples and shrines of Nikko, the final resting place of Japan's most famous shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Ieyasu was the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate (military government), which ruled Japan from 1600 until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Nikko, the site of his mausoleum, is listed as a World Heritage Site and known throughout Japan for its dazzlingly ornate architecture – quite different from the austere, minimalist style more typical of Japanese design. To start the day you'll make the relatively short journey from the capital by private coach to Nikko, where you will discover the renowned temple and shrine complex in its enchanting cedar forest setting. A local guide will be on hand to introduce you to some of the history of the area. Don't forget to look out for the famous "three wise monkeys" warning all comers to "see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil"! Tonight you'll be staying at a deluxe *ryokan* inn, with Japanese-style rooms and a delicious *kaiseki* dinner included.

Day 4 Karuizawa (B, D)

After an elaborate Japanese-style breakfast at your *ryokan*, you'll head out with your tour leader on a private coach for a half day of exploration. Our morning destination will be Nikko National Park, home to several spectacular waterfalls, lakes and beautiful forests. Our first stop will be to take the cable car up to Akechi-daira peak, high above Chuzen-ji lake, for spectacular panoramic views and photo opportunities. A short coach ride then takes us on to the lakeside area itself, and the 97-metre high *Kegon-no-taki* waterfalls. Around lunchtime, we will continue our three-hour journey to Karuizawa, an exclusive resort town famous as a holiday retreat for the well-heeled – including the Japanese Imperial Family. Arrival at the hotel will be in the late afternoon. In the evening you will have the chance to meet some of Karuizawa's nocturnal inhabitants when joining a guided flying squirrel watching tour. The evening will be round off with an included high-quality evening meal at the hotel.

Day 5 Karuizawa (B, L, D)

Today you will be joined by another knowledgeable and friendly local guide, as you visit some of Karuizawa's varied attractions - including the enchanting Shiraito Waterfall and the lunar landscapes created by lava flow on the flanks of active Mount Asama. Also included today will be a lesson in soba noodle-making, a speciality of the region. You will, of course, have the chance to eat the fruit of your labours for lunch! There should be time for a spot of shopping heading out for another included dinner, this time at a local restaurant.

Day 6 Nagano (B)

Today you will make the short bullet train journey from Karuizawa to Nagano, an alpine city famous both as the home of Zenko-ji, arguably Japan's most sacred temple, and as the host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics. You will then head to Yudanaka, a tiny spa town that has become famous the world over for its hot spring-bathing "snow monkeys". Tickets are included to the monkey reserve, which is reached by a very pleasant, flat forest trail. Our primate cousins are sure to fascinate you, as they keep warm in their

onsen bath, feed, groom, play and squabble! On your return to Nagano this evening, we recommend taking a leaf out of the monkeys' book by heading to the nearby bathhouse for a relaxing outdoor soak before an optional dinner in town.

Day 7 Kanazawa (B)

This morning you will have the chance to enjoy a slow breakfast, or explore Zenko-ji Temple before leaving Nagano. You could even rise early to join the monks at their morning prayer ceremony, at which guests are invited to search for the "key to paradise" in a pitch-dark passage underneath the main hall of the temple. It's said that grasping the key is equivalent to shaking hands with Buddha, and those who find it will find their way to Buddhist paradise! At lunchtime, you will leave Nagano and take the pleasant train rides to Kanazawa on the Japan Sea Coast. Like Kyoto, Kanazawa was spared bombing during World War II thanks to its impressive collection of religious sites and important cultural assets. Today it is therefore one of Japan's best-preserved historical cities. The region is renowned for its great seafood, so why not join your tour leader for a fabulous sushi or fish meal tonight?

Day 8 Kanazawa (B, L)

You will be joined by a private local guide, as well as your tour leader, for an extensive tour of Kanazawa's best sights. This is sure to include the wood-panelled geisha district of Higashi Chaya, the preserved houses of the samurai quarter, a traditional gold leaf workshop and, of course, Kanazawa's top attraction, Kenrokuen. This sublime landscape garden is lauded as one of Japan's top three, so we will ensure you have sufficient time to appreciate its full beauty. Additionally, if you have the energy after a busy tour, you might wish visit the local market or the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art.

Day 9 Kyoto (B, D)

If Tokyo is Japan's beacon of modernity, Kyoto is its repository of history. Serving as imperial capital for over a thousand years, Kyoto is home to a staggering 17 World Heritage Sites and a litany of ancient shrines, temples and gardens. After a wonderful express train ride along the shores of Lake Biwa, we will arrive in Kyoto with time to start exploring some of these attractions. Nishiki Food Market and the incredible Kyoto station complex are two alternative options that are not to be missed! Later in the day you'll join your tour leader and head to Gion, the heart of Japanese geisha culture. Here you'll have the chance to take part in a traditional tea ceremony, performed by a genuine Gion maiko (trainee geisha). A delicious evening meal at one of Kyoto's many outstanding restaurants will be included tonight.

Day 10 Kyoto (B)

On day ten you will be joined by a local Kyoto expert and board a private coach to visit some of Kyoto's most famous sights: the opulent Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku-ji; the tranquil gardens of Ginkaku-ji; then a wander through the historic Higashiyama district to Kiyomizu-dera Temple, perched precariously on a hillside overlooking the city. Kyoto has so much to offer that it would take you years to see it all, but with your tour leader on hand you'll certainly see a great selection of famous sites and lesser-known locations.

Day 11 Kyoto (B)

On day eleven you will have the choice to either continue exploring Kyoto, or head out of the city on an excursion to one of the many exciting destinations within easy reach by rail. Your tour leader will be heading to one of their favourite locations – perhaps the impressive samurai castle of Himeji or the ancient capital of Nara, with its giant Buddha and friendly deer. If you would prefer to break away from the group, your tour leader will be happy to help you make alternative arrangements for the day.

Day 12 Hakone (B, D)

Today you will jump aboard the bullet train and speed easterly to Hakone on the Tokaido line, following the ancient samurai highway linking old Tokyo (Edo) to the imperial capital of Kyoto. A private coach transfer will then take us to the heart of the Hakone area, located within the beautiful Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, just a stone's throw from Tokyo. This afternoon we will provide you with tickets for the outstanding Hakone Open-Air Museum, where you'll have the chance to wander amongst masterpieces by Moore and Rodin, set against a stunning mountainous backdrop. You are sure to love the hospitality of tonight's top-grade hotel, where your included evening meal will be meticulously prepared and served in a dining room with lovely ambience and decor.

Day 13 Hakone (B)

Today you'll have a full day to enjoy everything that Hakone has to offer, including a remarkably synchronised network of varied transportation. We will board a funicular, then cable car to the volcanic area known as Owakudani, famed for its views of Mount Fuji and its black eggs cooked in hot spring water. If the weather is favourable, you will be treated to truly spectacular views of Japan's most famous mountain. A cruise across Lake Ashi will drop us off in Hakone town, where we can learn about the ancient samurai Tokaido Highway, and shop for gifts and souvenirs, such as the beautiful marquetry crafts that Hakone is renowned for. We will be back in time for you to enjoy the comforts of our wonderful hotel, where a natural hot spring bath and a glass of champagne await you. This evening, you may opt for the lounge menu or hotel restaurant as your dinner option.

Day 14 Tokyo (B, D)

After a relaxed final morning in the verdant tranquility of Hakone, we head into the pumping heart of Tokyo's shopping and entertainment scene, Shinjuku. You might like to use this time in the capital to get some last-minute shopping done at one of the district's many department stores, visit the mammoth Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building to admire the views from its free observation deck, or stroll the beautiful Shinjuku Gyoen Park. Whatever you choose to do, Tokyo will inevitably keep you entertained during your final afternoon of the tour. This evening, you'll join your tour leader and group for an included final-night meal at one of the city's superb restaurants – the perfect way to toast the end of your trip in style.

Day 15 Tour Ends (B)

On your final morning it's time to say *sayonara* to Japan as you return to the airport by private car shared shuttle bus in time for your flight home, or to continue with your onward journey. Happy travels!



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Accommodation

Asakusa View Hotel, Tokyo

Located in the heart of Tokyo's most traditional district, the Asakusa View Hotel offers five-star accommodation and friendly service.

The View Hotel is the finest hotel in the Asakusa area. As the name suggests, the upper floors of the hotel command great views over the city, including Tokyo's newest and tallest landmark, the 634 m (2,080 ft) Skytree. The hotel's 26th-floor bar is a great place to unwind at the end of the day whilst enjoying a drink and the spectacular view. Hotel dining options include French, Chinese, or Japanese, as well as a coffee house, tea lounge, sake bar and all-day buffet restaurant. In addition to its excellent dining facilities, there is a pool and fitness centre, which can be used for an extra fee. Directly outside the hotel is Tokyo's newest subway line, the Tsukuba Express, which links Asakusa with Akihabara electronics district and the rest of Tokyo.

Senhime Monogatari, Nikko

The Senhime Monogatari is situated in an ideal location, just a short walking distance from the Toshogu Shrine World Heritage Site. Every Japanese-style, en suite room faces the Daiya River, with separate indoor and outdoor hot spring baths also available. There is a choice of Western or Japanese-style breakfast.

The Prince Hotel, Karuizawa

The Prince is a comfortable lakeside hotel located in the heart of Karuizawa's beautiful mountainside resort area. Rooms are all well sized and the hotel lobby, bar and a cosy library café provide additional space for guests to relax. The hotel is home to a French restaurant 'Beaux Sejours' and the dining area's panoramic window provides magnificent views of Mt. Asama and the nearby lake. The hotel is a 30 minute walk or short taxi ride from Karuizawa Station. There are walking and cycling routes nearby and bicycle hire is available from the hotel.

Metropolitan Hotel, Nagano

Directly connected to Nagano Station, the Metropolitan is a 12-storey hotel with 235 spacious guest rooms. The hotel has a wide range of restaurant options serving Japanese and Chinese cuisine, as well as a café. There is Wi-Fi access in the lobby, though unfortunately not in the guest rooms, and many of the rooms have excellent views over the city and surrounding mountains. The reception staff speak good English, so you can rest assured that you'll receive excellent service. Nagano City's most famous sight, Zenko-ji Temple, is just ten minutes away by local bus or a 30-minute walk through to the traditional district of town.

Nikko Hotel Kanazawa, Kanazawa

The Hotel Nikko Kanazawa is an elegant Western-style hotel located next to JR Kanazawa Station. It really couldn't be more conveniently located for sightseeing within the city and the surrounding area. At 130 m, it is also the tallest hotel on the Japan Sea side of the country. There are a wide variety of restaurants and bars serving European, Asian and Japanese cuisine as well as a pool, fitness centre, sauna and Jacuzzi.

The Okura Hotel, Kyoto, Kyoto

The Kyoto Hotel Okura was first established in 1888, but totally rebuilt to re-open with new deluxe standards in space and luxury in July 1994. Turn of the century wooden paneling, comfortable

lobby armchairs, majestic columns and lobby ceiling towering up to the second floor level, stained-glass panels and gentle lighting provide a welcome beacon for all visitors to the ancient capital of Japan.

Hyatt Regency Hakone, Hakone

This is a brand new luxury hotel in a great location in the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. The rooms are beautifully designed with modern touches, as well as offering great views out over the area. The hotel boasts top-quality Japanese and French restaurants, as well as the largest spa in the area. The hot spring baths are a great way to relax at the end of a busy day's sightseeing. Don't miss free drinks in the beautiful lounge area, available from 4-7 pm every day!

Century Southern Tower, Tokyo

Century Southern Tower makes for the perfect base from which to explore not just Shinjuku, but the whole of central Tokyo and beyond. The hotel lobby is to be found on the 20th floor of a building that also houses Microsoft's Japan HQ. The lobby offers great views of the city, and on clear days you can see as far as Mount Fuji – some 90 km (60 mi) away. All rooms are stylishly decorated with modern, earthy tones and high-quality bed linen. The bathrooms have a range of beauty products provided, and rooms come with flat screen TVs, direct dial phones and a free high-speed internet connection. In the evening you may like to use the café bar for light refreshments.

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 Info-Pack
- ✓ Full-time services of your InsideJapan tour leader
- ✓ 14 nights' accommodation
- ✓ Breakfast every day, two lunches and seven evening meals
- ✓ Arrival & departure airport transfers by private car
- ✓ IC transport card with 2,500 yen credit for city transport
- ✓ Seven-day Japan Rail Pass
- ✓ Three-day Hakone Free Pass for transport in the Hakone region
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan, including airport transfers
- ✓ Sumida river cruise & entrance to Hamarikyū Gardens in Tokyo
- ✓ Half-day private guide service in Tokyo including travel by private coach.
- ✓ Full-day private guide service in Nikko & Karuizawa including entrance fees and travel by private coach.
- ✓ Flying squirrel watching tour and *soba* noodle-making lesson in Karuizawa
- ✓ Full-day private guide service in Kanazawa including entrance fees
- ✓ Private transfer & entrance to the Jigokudani monkey park in Yudanaka

- ✓ Private afternoon tea with a *maiko*
- ✓ Full-day private guide service in Kyoto including travel by private coach.
- ✓ Tickets to Hakone Open-Air Museum
- ✓ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout the trip
- ✓ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Karuizawa, Karuizawa to Kanazawa and from Kyoto to Tokyo

NOT Included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Any local transport (subways, taxis, buses) unless covered by the included transport passes
- ✗ Entrance fees (including those for temples, shrines and museums) unless otherwise specified
- ✗ Baggage handling and luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified

Practical notes

Accommodation/ Bathroom arrangements

During the tour we stay in a variety of different accommodation, sometimes Western-style, sometimes Japanese-style. At all night stops on the Japan Enchantment tour your room will have full en suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet). The accommodation in Hakone and Karuizawa also offer shared natural hot-spring baths for your enjoyment.

Policy on single rooms

Single travellers will be expected to pay a single supplement for this tour and will be provided with a single room at both Western and Japanese-style accommodation.

Transport on tour

We will have the use of a private minibus in Tokyo (half day), Nikko, Karuizawa, Kyoto, and for our transfer to our Hakone hotel. For all other transfers, we will be making use of Japan's first-rate transport network. All the hotels and ryokan have been chosen for their location close to the nearest station. However, you might have to carry your bags for short distances. Most stations have escalators and/or lifts (elevators).

Luggage

For ease of transit, we will be forwarding your luggage on occasion: please note you will be without your main baggage for 1 night in Nikko, 1 night in Nagano and 2 nights in Hakone. See more detailed information on what to pack in the luggage section below.

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.

International Flights

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



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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 2pm. 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

Meals

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements and we will ensure that all included meals meet your specific 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 fluent English-speaking tour leader who is a resident of Japan and a strong speaker of the local language. 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/currency.asp> or

Best Foreign Exchange - <http://www.bestforeignexchange.com/services-travel-money-by-post.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 usually only open business hours (8am to 6pm). Just be sure that you know your four-digit PIN. ATMs are also available at 7-11 convenience stores. These accept most foreign cards but not all. 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. N.B. Bank ATMs bearing your card's symbol (Visa, Mastercard etc) will most likely NOT accept your card, as counterintuitive as that sounds.

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 tippie 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 November 2016:

1 Australian Dollar AUD = 82 yen
1 British Pound GBP = 136 yen
1 Euro EUR = 117 yen
1 United States Dollar USD = 109 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: <http://www.pupuru.com/affiliate/J13>

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: <http://www.pupuru.com/affiliate/J13/10>

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 (*takkyubin*) 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 for sightseeing. For your evening meals we suggest smart casual attire. 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



Get beneath the surface

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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%