

INSIDE JAPAN

SMALL GROUP TOUR

Luxury Japan

SUPERIOR

14 NIGHTS



Tour overview

Luxury Japan is our newest superior Small Group Tour. Designed for travellers who want to see Japan's most celebrated sights alongside the lesser-known spots, without compromising on comfort.

Over 14 nights you travel at an unhurried pace, stay in carefully selected upper 4-star and 5-star hotels, and are guided by your Insider tour leader.

That support changes the feel of the trip. With luggage forwarding between key stops, and an Insider who keeps everything running smoothly, you can focus on the culture and the moments in between. This starts in Tokyo with a private arrival transfer and group welcome dinner, with a guided tour through Tokyo's justifiably famous and lesser-visited spots: Senso-ji temple, Koishikawa Korakuen Garden and Jimbocho.

Throughout, this luxury tour leans into the traditions that most first-time visitors miss, or are hard to reach when travelling independently. In Inuyama, a riverside castle town with one of Japan's oldest surviving castles, you'll see a goma Buddhist fire ceremony.

En route to Kyoto you're treated to a traditional *kaiseki* banquet. Once there, you'll explore the city by private bus with your Insider, taking in Sanjūsangendō's hall of 1,001 life-size Buddhist sculptures, the towering pagoda of Daigo ji and Heian Shrine's gardens. Your first evening includes an exclusive dinner with a geisha, offering insight into Kyoto's performing arts traditions.

Further south in Kyushu, Nagasaki city is built on centuries of global exchange. Visit Dejima Dutch Trading Post and Glover Garden, with time at the Atomic Bomb Museum. Beyond the city, Higashi Sonogi and the pottery village of Okawachiyama bring a quieter perspective: tea fields, kilns, and communities known for local produce and crafts.

In Fukuoka, your Insider introduces the nighttime *yatai* food stalls, before a day trip to Yanagawa for a boat ride through historic waterways – the "Venice of Kyushu".

Your final stop is Osaka, "Japan's kitchen", with street food, contemporary art, plus an optional day trip to Nara, before returning to Tokyo for a final evening.

Luxury Japan brings cultural depth into sharper focus, backed by premium comfort and expert Insider guiding, from the major cities to the less obvious corners



Highlights

Explore the hip, lesser visited neighbourhoods in Tokyo and the iconic Sensoji Temple

Visit one of Japan's oldest surviving castles and watch a Buddhist fire ceremony in Inuyama

Three nights in Kyoto, with a geisha dinner and a free day to design your own adventure, with the help of your tour leader

Discover Nagasaki's history at the Dejima trading post, Glover Garden and Atomic Bomb Museum

Meet tea growers in Higashi Sonogi and visit the historic kilns in the pottery village of Okawachiyama

Take a gentle boat ride along the historic waterways of Yanagawa town

Sample some of the best of Japan's food culture: a *kaiseki* banquet lunch, Fukuoka's *yatai* food stalls and street food hopping in Osaka

Superior tours

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

- Local professional guides and experts in key destinations (this is in addition to your tour leader)
- Select private minibuses transfers
- Four to five-star accommodation in every stop
- Western-style beds throughout
- 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

Day by day

Many of our customers choose to arrive a day or two early to get over jet-lag and get the most out of the tour. Whatever the case, we will be happy to make arrangements to suit your needs.



Day 1 – Tokyo

Arrive in Tokyo and meet your private driver for a smooth transfer to the hotel. Your tour leader will be waiting in the lobby to welcome you, answer any questions, and offer advice for your free time if you've booked pre-tour nights. On your first evening, join your Insider for a short tour orientation and an included welcome dinner in the lively Akasaka district, where countless small restaurants line the side streets. This relaxed first evening eases you into local dining culture at an *izakaya*, where casual tapas-style dining gives you a chance to sample a variety of Japanese dishes, from fresh sashimi to grilled *yakitori* skewers. It's a great chance to get to know your group.

Day 2 – Tokyo

Today you'll hop between Tokyo's neighbourhoods by bus. Many of them aren't as widely known, offering a window into the everyday undercurrents that give Tokyo its true character. Beginning at Koishikawa Korakuen Garden, an Edo-period landscape of carp ponds and maple-lined paths framed by skyscrapers, you'll then shift to the old quarter of Yanaka and the vermilion shrine-gate tunnels of Nezu Shrine. We'll break for lunch in Jimbocho, recently named 'world's coolest neighbourhood' by *Time Out* magazine. There's trendy cafes with graffiti etched into stone walls, hundreds of second-hand bookshops and *ukiyo-e* woodblock print galleries. We continue on to Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest temple in Asakusa, and Kappabashi Dougu-gai (cookware street), stacked with chef's knives and lacquerware. You'll have time to browse before heading back to the hotel. This evening is free choice for dinner, your Insider will make suggestions suited to your taste.

Day 3 – Inuyama

Board the *Shinkansen* bullet train to Nagoya and transfer by private coach to the Noritake Museum, tracing the Meiji-era story of porcelain innovation. You'll have lunch (included) at the city's oldest restaurant, where European-inspired dishes are prepared with local ingredients. We'll continue to Inuyama, a riverside castle town backing onto forested hills. After check-in and some time to relax in the on-site *onsen* hot spring baths, we'll sit down to an included dinner at the hotel restaurant, complete with castle view.

Day 4 – Inuyama

This morning brings a mesmerizing blaze of flames at Inuyama's foremost Buddhist temple – a Buddhist *goma* fire ceremony shows off the rhythms and rituals of esoteric Buddhism. Your Insider will then take you for a wander through Inuyama's *jokamachi* castle town with some free time for lunch at one of the local restaurants en route. There's time to take in the timber-fronted houses and old merchant facades, and visit Inuyama

Castle, one of only twelve original samurai-era castles remaining in Japan. Later, try matcha and traditional *wagashi* sweets at Urakuen Garden, where stone lanterns, seasonal flowers and moss-covered landscapes set a tranquil scene. This evening is free for you to spend as you please, but you have the option to join your tour leader for dinner at a local restaurant in the old town.

Day 5 – Kyoto via Otsu

This morning we'll travel by private bus west towards Kyoto, stopping in Otsu city on the shore of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest freshwater lake. Here, we're treated to a refined *kaiseki* Japanese banquet lunch at a renowned local restaurant, before continuing to nearby Mii-dera, one of Japan's largest and most important temple complexes with panoramic views over the lake. Despite its historic importance and proximity to Kyoto, the temple isn't on the average tourist's radar, and we have the luxury of visiting without the Kyoto crowds. After arriving in Kyoto, with time to relax after checking in, tonight's highlight is an exclusive Kyoto geisha dinner. At an elegant local restaurant you'll have the chance to meet a *maiko* (young geisha) talk with her about her life and watch her perform a dance alongside a *geiko* (experienced geisha) providing musical accompaniment. The performance is followed by a multi-course dinner (included).

Day 6 – Kyoto

Today you'll visit the quieter side of Kyoto, avoiding some of the more well-trodden sights that have become overtouristed in recent years. At Sanjūsangendō, 1,001 life-size wooden statues of the deity Kannon line the temple hall. In the far south-east corner of the city, at Daigo-ji, Kyoto's oldest pagoda (951 AD) backs onto forested slopes, with vermilion bridges, tranquil ponds and the scent of drifting incense – the history of this pilgrimage site goes back over a millennium. We'll pause for lunch (included) in the Fushimi-Momoyama *sake* district, before heading back to central Kyoto to take a walkthrough Heian Shrine's gardens. Follow meandering paths, jump across stepping stones and stroll past iris beds and mirror-still pools. The garden was used as a filming location for *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Returning to the hotel, you'll have a free evening to explore Kyoto's restaurant scene, with advice from your Insider on the best places to go.

Day 7 – Kyoto

Today is a free day to follow your interests, with guidance from your Insider. You could continue exploring Kyoto's shrines – there are hundreds of them, you'll never complete the city! Or, if you're feeling 'temped out', you might opt to spend the day browsing the city's antique districts: stores selling textiles, traditional *washi* paper or *matcha* tea. If you want to go further afield, your Insider will be happy to help you purchase train tickets. There's the nearby city of Himeji, home to the largest surviving samurai-era castle in Japan, where part of the *You Only Live Twice* Bond film was

set. Or you could head further west to Hiroshima for the day and visit the sobering Peak Park and Memorial Museum (with time for their version of *okonomiyaki* pancake!). Whatever you choose to do, your Insider will be able to provide plenty of suggestions tailored to your interests.

Day 8 – Nagasaki

This morning we'll travel from Kyoto to Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands. Here, historic port cities and a lively food culture offer a change in pace from the well-trodden paths of Honshu main island. You'll travel in style in the bullet train's first class 'Green Car' carriage, with roomier, comfier seats than standard class, covering 700km and arriving early afternoon. On arrival we'll take a short walk to the scenic Glover Garden (not far from our hotel) with views across Nagasaki harbour. It was once home to Thomas Glover, a 19th century Scottish merchant – a key figure of Japan's early international trade and modernisation. Dinner tonight is included, at one of your Insider's favorite local spots. You may get to try the classic Nagasaki dish *champon* – steaming, Chinese-style seafood noodles.

Day 9 – Nagasaki

You'll begin the day at Dejima, the restored island trading post that was once Japan's sole gateway to the Western world. Moving closer to the present day, you'll visit the Nagasaki Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum, a place for thoughtful reflection on the events of 9th August 1945. The afternoon is free for you to explore – your Insider will have suggestions based on your interests. You could wander the Teramachi temple district, visit the UNESCO designated Oura Church to learn about the city's early Christian heritage, or explore the Gunkanjima digital museum, which showcases the history of an island coal mine just off the coast, mysteriously and suddenly abandoned overnight in the 1970s. Before a free evening for dinner, you might like to join your Insider for a trip up Mt Inasa by cable car. The panorama at the summit is ranked as one of the top three night views in Japan.

Day 10 – Fukuoka

This morning you'll leave the city behind, travelling by private bus into the rural Higashi-Sonogi district. Here, the coast rises dramatically into steep hillsides and is home to Kyushu's "tea country". Your local guide will give you a deep dive into the local tea farming culture. You'll walk between tea rows, learn how to brew the perfect cup, meet the farmers and finish with a visit to a local restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon, you'll continue to Okawachiyama, the "village of secret kilns," where fine Nabeshima porcelain has been produced for centuries. You'll visit a potter's workshop and learn how the intricate patterns and glazes come to life, with free time to explore the pottery shops lining the side streets of this secluded mountain town. It's then a short drive on to Fukuoka, Kyushu's biggest city, for check in and dinner selected by your Insider (included).

Day 11 – Fukuoka

Today you'll take a local train to the quiet canal town of Yanagawa, just south of Fukuoka, known as "the Venice of Kyushu". You'll take a leisurely ride along the traditional willow-lined waterways by wooden boat, passing under low bridges and alongside old merchant homes. You'll visit the Toshima Family Residence, an Edo-period samurai home with *tatami*-floored rooms and pocket-tiny gardens, before returning to Fukuoka for a free evening. You might like to join your Insider for a night of Fukuoka fun – hopping between the yatai open-air food stalls that line the riversides and downtown districts. Thick, rich *tonkotsu* pork-broth ramen is a local specialty. Rub shoulders with locals while slurping down these piping hot noodles and let the rest of the evening's fun unravel from there!

Day 12 – Osaka

This morning we'll head back to Japan's main island by bullet train, arriving in Osaka, Japan's "merchant capital" by midday. On arrival you'll visit the Kinutani Koji Tenku Art Museum, celebrating a local artist who combined Italian fresco techniques with Japanese themes. Expect dragons, mythological deities riding jet skis, and Mt Fuji in bold, colourful, and almost cartoonish style. After checking in, take a rest and prepare your stomach for an unforgettable evening. As a central hub for food distribution and the rice trade during the samurai period, Osaka was nicknamed "Japan's kitchen" and this moniker holds just as true today. Osakans are known nationwide for their down-to-earth, heart-on-their-sleeve, gregarious personality. This evening, join your Insider for a street-food tour in the Shinsekai district – crisp *kushikatsu* skewers, *takoyaki* octopus balls, and savoury *okonomiyaki* pancakes are just some of the local specialties you might try. Nobody's going home hungry this evening.

Day 13 – Osaka

Today is a free day for you to continue your cultural adventure, in Osaka or beyond. You may join your Insider on a day trip to Nara, Japan's first capital (8th century). Today, wild deer wander between ancient Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. The colossal bronze Buddha statue at Todai-ji is a must see (the cost of the bronze used to build it almost bankrupted the country). Staying in Osaka centre, you might explore trendy cafés and vintage shops in Nakazakicho, contemporary youth sub-culture and fashion in Amerikamura, or continue your education into Osaka's food scene at the Kuromon Market. Other local options include the Minoh Falls hiking trail, Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine, Shitenno-ji temple and the Expo '70 Park. Your Insider will assist you in crafting your perfect day. Regroup in the evening for a visit to TeamLab Botanical Garden, a nighttime open-air digital art exhibition where light installations transform Nagai Botanical Garden.

Day 14 – Tokyo

This morning you'll return to Tokyo by bullet train, arriving around midday with a free afternoon in the capital for any last-minute sightseeing or shopping. Your hotel overlooks Hamarikyu Garden, a serene spot with tidal ponds and pine groves. Or, you could head over to the upscale Ginza district for art galleries, historic department stores with hidden basement food halls, classic cafes and high-end boutiques. Tonight's farewell dinner (included) brings the group together to raise a final toast to the journey and reminisce about everything you've seen and done.

Day 15 – Tokyo

Say *sayonara* to Japan and the group, as you return by private car to Haneda or Narita Airport for your flight home, or to continue your onward journey... Happy travels!

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible. You will be provided on the ground with Day-by-Day sheets and the tour leader will outline what they are going to do each day in detail. If you would like to break away from the group and do something different, your Insider will be available to offer advice, and help you plan your day.

Where you'll stay

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

● TOKYO

The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho

Part of The Luxury Collection, The Prince Gallery is perched high above the city in Tokyo's Kioicho district. The property blends sleek contemporary design with refined Japanese elegance – think floating desks and shelves, and day beds framed against large windows. Every room located above the 30th floor offers sweeping city views. The hotel's calm atmosphere contrasts beautifully with its central location: you're just a short walk from the Imperial Palace gardens and the boutiques of Akasaka. After a day of exploring, unwind in the spa, have a cocktail in the lounge bar with floor-to-ceiling windows, or dine at one of the hotel's *teppanyaki* restaurants.

● INUYAMA

Hotel Indigo Inuyama Urakuen Garden

Set beside the historic Urakuen Garden in Inuyama, Hotel Indigo is a boutique riverside property that blends contemporary comfort with a deep sense of local culture. Each room reflects the area's traditional craftsmanship, incorporating warm woods, subtle colour palettes and design details inspired by Inuyama Castle and tea-house architecture. The setting is wonderfully peaceful, with leafy paths leading directly into the garden and glimpses of the Jo-an teahouse, considered a national treasure. The hotel's on-site restaurant overlooking the river focuses on contemporary dishes prepared with regional ingredients, while hot-spring facilities provide an ideal way to unwind after a day exploring the castle town streets.

● KYOTO

The Thousand Kyoto

Located mere steps from Kyoto Station yet remarkably tranquil, The Thousand Kyoto is a modern, design-forward hotel inspired by harmony, light and understated luxury. Guest rooms feature minimalist décor, soft natural materials and spa style bathrooms that echo the serenity of Kyoto's temples and gardens. The hotel places strong emphasis on culture and craftsmanship, showcased in its curated art, tea house inspired public spaces and thoughtful service. With several excellent dining options, a soothing wellness spa and easy access to train, bus and subway transport, The Thousand is an ideal base for exploring historic Kyoto. After a busy day of sightseeing the 'Tea & Bar' lounge is a perfect retreat for an afternoon infusion or nightcap.

● NAGASAKI

Hotel Indigo Nagasaki Glover Street

Opened in 2024 and located on the slopes of Glover Street, this historic red-brick building began its life as a monastic college in the 19th century, before becoming an

What's included

- ✓ Your InsideJapan Info-Pack
- ✓ Full-time services of your InsideJapan tour leader (Insider)
- ✓ 14 nights' accommodation
- ✓ Breakfast daily, four lunches and seven evening meals
- ✓ Arrival and departure airport transfers by private car
- ✓ IC transport card with 3,000yen credit for city transport
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan
- ✓ Entrance fee to Ishikawa Korakuen Garden in Tokyo
- ✓ Entrance fee to Noritake Craft Center and Museum in Nagoya
- ✓ Goma Buddhist fire ceremony experience in Inuyama
- ✓ Entrance fees to Inuyama Castle and Urakuen Garden in Inuyama
- ✓ Entrance fee to Mii-dera temple in Otsu
- ✓ Tickets for sightseeing stops on Day 6 in Kyoto
- ✓ Entrance fees for Glover Garden, Dejima and Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki
- ✓ Tickets for Mt Inasa cable car in Nagasaki
- ✓ Tea tasting and tea fields visit in Higashi-Sonogi
- ✓ Kiln visit in Okawachiyama
- ✓ Canal cruise and Toshima Family Residence in Yanagawa
- ✓ Entrance fee for Kinutani Koji Tenku Art Museum in Osaka
- ✓ Ticket for TeamLab Botanical Garden Osaka
- ✓ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Kyoto, Kyoto to Fukuoka and Fukuoka to Tokyo
- ✓ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout trip

Not included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Any local transport (subway, 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

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Important tour information



Fitness

Even when not using public transport, sightseeing in Japan often involves walking between sights, climbing stairs 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 maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

Dietary requirements

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

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

Please note that the traditional restaurant used for the kaiseki Japanese banquet-style lunch on Day 5 cannot prepare vegan, gluten-free or guaranteed allergen-free meals. If you have any of these requirements, it may be necessary to arrange an alternative meal at a nearby restaurant.

En suite / shared facilities

All accommodations used on this tour have en-suite bath and toilet. Culturally, communal bathing is common practice in Japan. Shared facilities (when available) are optional to use and will always be separated by gender.

Policy on single rooms

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

Double rooms

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

Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English speaker who is a resident of Japan and able to speak Japanese. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader (Insider) travels with the group and stays at the same hotels, 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 they are available pretty much all day

every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion!

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

Luggage

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

For ease of transit, we will be forwarding your luggage on three occasions and you will be without your main baggage for two nights in Inuyama, two nights in Nagasaki and two nights in Osaka. You will need a small overnight bag (e.g. backpack) for use when we forward our main bags to the next location.

Transport on tour

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

International Flights

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

Check-in

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

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

The tour leader will be staying at the first hotel for two nights before the tour starts so they will be available for advice if you choose to book pre-tour nights. We recommend booking at least one extra night to check in and relax before the tour begins.