



CLASSIC

Summer Elegance

13 Nights

Tokyo > Matsumoto > Takayama > Kanazawa > Kyoto > Hakone > Tokyo

Embrace Japan's summer season: fewer tourists, summer flavours and a celebratory atmosphere

Follow in the footsteps of samurai by visiting one of Japan's best-preserved castles in Matsumoto

Explore traditional thatched farmhouses at the Hida no Sato folk village in the Japanese Alps

Visit the world-famous Kenrokuen Garden in Kanazawa – without the peak season crowds

Meet a *maiko* (trainee geisha) in the Gion geisha district of Kyoto

Visit the sculptures at Hakone's Open-Air Art Museum: from Picasso to Rodin

Snack your way through Sugamo, on a food tour of one of Japan's "hidden districts"

IJT CLASSIC TOURS

Mid-range tours that cover Japan's classic sights as well as regional or season-specific itineraries.

Style Facts

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

Tour Overview

Hectic and celebratory, yet still with pockets of quiet and deep natural beauty, summer is Japan at its most raw, intoxicating and unforgettable – and that's exactly what our Summer Elegance tour captures.

With fewer tourists, iconic sights are quieter. In cities, locals spill onto rooftops, riversides and parks to eat and drink. Tokyo's beer gardens buzz with after-work crowds clinking ice-cold drinks. Street vendors serve *kakigori* (shaved ice) in seasonal flavours like salted lychee or watermelon, and chilled *zaru-soba* noodles are a summer delicacy in Matsumoto.

This tour blends highlights from our best-selling Spring and Autumn Elegance itineraries, with more free time to explore how and where you want. In Tokyo, visit the city's oldest Buddhist temple, Senso-ji, then retreat to the peaceful Rikugien Gardens. In Matsumoto, explore the striking Black Crow Castle and in Kanazawa, stroll Kenrokuen – one of Japan's top three gardens. In Kyoto, meet a *maiko* (trainee geisha), explore Fushimi Inari's 10,000 vermilion torii gates at sunrise, or lunch at a *kawadoko* restaurant, suspended over a cool stream.

You'll also experience quieter, traditional sides of Japan. In the alpine town of Takayama, sip chilled *sake* before exploring Edo-era merchant streets, lined with wooden-fronted shops. In Hakone, ascend through mountain air by cable car, sail Lake Ashi by pirate ship, and take in the panoramic views of Mount Fuji (on a clear day), with black sesame ice cream in hand.

Your Insider guide will help tailor your experience. From Tokyo, you may choose to escape the city heat with a day trip to Nikko to see the UNESCO-listed Toshogu Shrine – that much quieter in the summer season.

From Kyoto you have the option to head west to Hiroshima for the day (your Insider will be happy to help you purchase train tickets), visiting the moving Peace Memorial Museum and sampling the city's famed *okonomiyaki* pancakes.

Summer Elegance offers a well-paced, enriching journey through Japan's iconic and lesser-known sights – all without the peak season crowds. Travelling in a small group with an expert Insider, you'll uncover the country's landscapes, culture, and seasonal traditions at their most vibrant.



Day by day

Many of our customers choose to arrive a day or two early to get over jetlag 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 (D)

On arrival in Tokyo, you're met at the airport by your driver and travel by shuttle bus to your hotel in the Asakusa district. You have the rest of today free to explore the area: there's the 'lucky cat' shrine of Imado a 20 min walk away, and closer to home is Hoppy Street, packed with casual eateries and *izakaya* bars just a few minutes' walk from our hotel. But don't fill up too much – we have a group meal at one of the area's excellent restaurants (included) this evening.

Day 2 Tokyo (B, L)
Our first morning starts with a short walk to Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest and most revered Buddhist temple. Here, you can have a go at some of the traditional temple customs yourself – like drawing *omikuj*i fortunes and using the purification font. Your Insider will tell you more about the meanings behind *omamori* charms, the five-story pagoda, and the Kannon statue.

At lunchtime, we'll hop on the subway over to the Sugamo district for a food tour, guided by a local. Known for its nostalgic feel, Sugamo offers a quieter, local side of Tokyo. Visit family-run shops and sample regional treats, like *shio daifuku* (salted mochi) or ice cream with honeycomb, while connecting with the community as you browse.

The day ends with a visit to Rikugien Gardens, a beautifully preserved Edo-era urban garden, half-hidden by surrounding skyscrapers. It's a lovely place to explore strolling winding paths and taking in the seasonal scenery, reflected in the garden's tranquil ponds.

You'll have a free choice for dinner tonight. We recommend trying one of Tokyo's summer specials – rooftop beer gardens, packed out with locals enjoying ice-cold drinks.

Day 3 Tokyo (B)
Today you can choose how to spend your day. Accompany your tour leader on an excursion to Kamakura or Nikko, spend some more time exploring Tokyo, or branch out on an independent day trip.

Kamakura is a seaside town famous for its giant Buddha and numerous sacred sites, craft shops, boutiques, and nature walks. In summer, its beaches come to life – filled with Tokyoites making the most of a seaside summer dip.

Nikko is home to the lavishly decorated, gold-leaf Toshogu Shrine – and is far quieter in summer (even as a UNESCO site). With the shade of the towering cedar trees and its location 600m above sea level, it's a refreshing escape from the city.

Whatever you decide, your tour leader will be happy to help you plan your day.

Day 4 Matsumoto (B)
Today you'll travel to the city of Matsumoto, close to the Kita Alps mountain range. We head northwest from Tokyo by express train, passing close to Mount Fuji and the Minami Alps. Matsumoto is famous for its impressive "Black Crow" castle, one of the 12 remaining original samurai castles in Japan. Make sure you take the time to explore the *donjon* (main keep) and its museum. Beyond the castle, the city has a very relaxed atmosphere – exploring the riverside merchant's quarter, with its black and white fronted wooden buildings, is a good way to spend the afternoon. This evening, your tour leader arranges an optional group meal at one of their favourite local restaurants, and in summer, chilled *zaru-soba* noodles are likely to feature. Served on a bamboo mat with a soy-based dipping sauce, paired with an ice-cold drink, there's nothing quite like it. If you're feeling adventurous, you could try *basashi* – raw horse – a local speciality. After dinner, the illuminated grounds of the castle provide a stunning backdrop for an evening stroll.

Day 5 Takayama (B, D)
This morning is kept free for you to explore any parts of Matsumoto you didn't quite get to yesterday, before we make our way further into the Japanese Alps.

Accompanied by views of summer-green forest valleys, we wind our way to Takayama by bus, a town traditionally known for its high-quality crafting. Here, we explore the beautifully preserved wooden buildings of the old merchant district – Sanno-machi district. Here, you can peruse craft shops and indulge in a sake-tasting session at one of the local breweries – best served ice cold in the summer. A local dinner is included this evening.

Day 6 Takayama (B)
This morning, we visit Hida no Sato Folk Village. Just out of town, the open-air museum provides a glimpse of Japanese mountain life, pre-industrialisation. Wander between the traditional, thatched *gassho zukuri* farmhouses: known as the "praying hands" houses, thanks to their triangular roofs.

You have some time this afternoon to explore as you please, and your Insider guide can offer suggestions. One option is to visit the Jinya, a preserved, Edo-period government building, where you can walk into the old courtrooms, once the centre of Hida's politics. Summer means festival season, and the festival floats museum, Takayama Matsuri Yatai Kaikan, is another great choice today. In fact, summer in Japan is widely regarded as festival season, with small local events taking place in towns and villages across the country: you never know when you might turn a corner and find an unannounced party procession! Alternatively, simply browsing Takayama's cafes and shops, tucked inside traditional wooden buildings, is in itself, a great way to spend an afternoon.

Dinner isn't included tonight, but we suggest heading out to try Hida's speciality beef. It may not be as well-known as the Kobe variety, but locals are fiercely proud of it – and we promise it's just as tasty!

Day 7 Kanazawa (B)
Travelling by private coach, you leave the mountains behind in exchange for a day in Kanazawa on the Japan Sea coast. Like Kyoto, the city of Kanazawa escaped bombing during World War II – meaning that it's one of Japan's best-preserved historical cities today.

We arrive in time for lunch, which we can grab from Omicho market (not included). Kanazawa is known for its seafood, and the market's *kaisendon* (fish-topped rice bowls) are local favourites (the queues are long, but worth the wait). Then, we head to the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, where permanent installations include Leandro Erlich's illusory "Swimming Pool". We wrap up the afternoon at the Nomura House in the city's preserved samurai district – where highlights include looking up at the coffered cypress ceiling and visiting the courtyard garden – ranked as one of the top three in Japan by the Journal of Japanese Gardening.

Day 8 Kyoto (B, D)
This morning, we visit Kenrokuen garden before the crowds arrive and the temperatures rise. It's one of Japan's top three gardens, so experiencing it

in summer, when it's much quieter, is a rare treat. Midmorning, we head to Kyoto by train, passing Japan's largest lake (Lake Biwa) along the way. This afternoon you have time to rest or join your tour leader in exploring the historic Higashiyama district, before a late afternoon stroll to Gion, the city's traditional geisha quarter. Here, we meet with a *maiko* (trainee geisha). After a dance and music performance, you have the chance to ask questions about her life and geisha training, as we sip tea together. Next, we head out to one of the city restaurants for an included group meal, arranged by your Insider at one of their favourite restaurants. Chefs in Kyoto are famous for their *kodawari* – an obsession with the details of their specialised cuisine, from sushi to ramen, with an emphasis on locally sourced, seasonal ingredients.

Day 9 – Kyoto (B)
Today, our Insider leads a tour through Kyoto, focusing on their favourite spots, group interest and of course, the weather. Kyoto is known as the "City of Ten Thousand Temples" – so you can bet your bottom yen there'll be a temple or two, each with its own cultural and spiritual significance. We could also visit Nijo Castle to see the "nightingale floors" or explore the ethereal bamboo groves of Arashiyama, which are less crowded in the summer season. There are plenty of pit stops for cooling coffee breaks and a seasonal *kakigori* shaved ice or two (try salted lychee or watermelon).

In the afternoon, we visit Kyoto's brand new TeamLab Biovortex: an immersive and experimental art exhibition.

Day 10 Kyoto (B)
This morning, beat the heat and crowds with a sunrise visit to Kyoto's Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its thousands of vermilion-coloured *torii* gates. The rest of the day is free time. You can choose to explore independently or your Insider may suggest a day trip – the ancient city of Nara, with its famously friendly deer; or Hiroshima, for a visit to the poignant Peace Memorial Museum, and *okonomiyaki* – a savoury pancake loaded with toppings. If you'd rather stay closer to the city, head to Kyoto's leafy northern hills and eat lunch at a *kawadoko* restaurant, suspended above a cooling mountain stream.

If there's somewhere you'd particularly like to visit, your Insider will be happy to help you make arrangements.

Day 11 Hakone (B, D)
It's all aboard the *Shinkansen* bullet train for the journey to Hakone, one of Japan's most popular hot spring resorts, part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. Your tickets to the Chokoku no Mori Open-Air Museum are included, and this afternoon we'll visit the sculptures – including works by Moore, Rodin, Kusama and Picasso – set against vibrant green grasses and trees. We recommend trying a relaxing foot bath within the grounds. After you've worked up a healthy appetite in the fresh mountain air, it's time for dinner at our hotel.

Day 12 Hakone (B, D)
Your (included) "Hakone Free Pass" tickets allow unlimited travel on nearly all transport in the Hakone region – including cable car, funicular railway and even a pirate ship. On today's itinerary is a visit to an old samurai checkpoint to find out about Hakone's past as a "post town" on

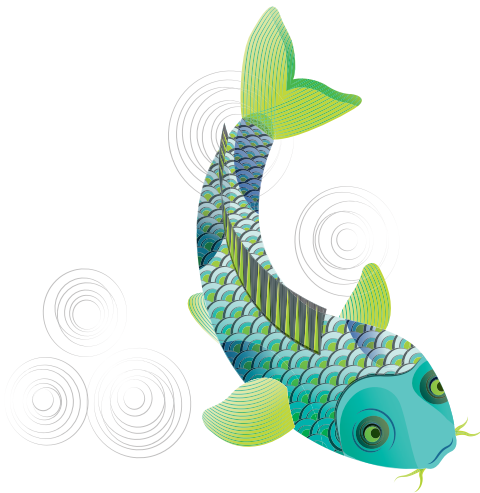
the ancient Tokaido trail, a trip to Owakudani volcano and, if the weather obliges, spectacular views of Mount Fuji. There will be time to look at the marquetry crafts Hakone is famous for – decorative, inlaid patterns or images on wooden or veneer furniture. Don't forget to try black sesame ice cream before you leave. Dinner is included again at our hotel.

Day 13 Tokyo (B, D)
A private coach takes us back to Hakone Yumoto Station, where we board the train for our final destination, Tokyo. Based in Shinjuku, we're minutes from Tokyo's nightlife district, the Godzilla sculpture and the glittering new Kabukicho Tower. Shinjuku is one of the busiest and best-connected stations in Tokyo, so you can speed to just about anywhere on your final day. It's like a magic (if a little confusing) portal – so use your Insider's insight to your advantage!

To round off the tour, we've included a final dinner with the group – a chance to reflect on an incredible two weeks and share memories of your journey through Japan.

Day 14 Tour ends (B)
Finally, it's time to say goodbye, before making your way back to the airport, by arranged transfer. If you're continuing your holiday, enjoy the rest of your Japan, or Asia adventure!

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. You will be provided with Day-by-Day sheets on the ground and your tour leader will outline what you'll do each day in detail. If you'd like to break away from the group and do something different, they can help you plan that, too.



What's included

- ✔ Your comprehensive InsideJapan Info-Pack
- ✔ Airport transfers and all transport between destinations in Japan
- ✔ IC transport card with 3,000 yen credit for city transport
- ✔ Full-time services of your InsideJapan tour leader (Insider)
- ✔ 13 nights' accommodation
- ✔ Breakfast daily, one lunch and six evening meals
- ✔ Tokyo foodie tour and entrance fee to Rikuguen Gardens in Tokyo
- ✔ Takayama bus pass
- ✔ Transfer from Takayama to Kanazawa by private coach
- ✔ Entrance to the Hida no Sato folk village
- ✔ Entrance to Kenrokuen Gardens in Kanazawa
- ✔ Private afternoon tea with a *maiko* (trainee geisha)
- ✔ Entrance to TeamLab Biovortex
- ✔ Hakone Free Pass for transport in the Hakone region
- ✔ Entrance to the Hakone Open-Air Museum
- ✔ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Takayama, Takayama to Kyoto and from Kyoto to Tokyo
- ✔ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout trip

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 – you will be expected to carry your own luggage

Sample Accommodation

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.

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

Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel, Matsumoto
This modern hotel is, in part, a conversion of a classic Meiji-era bank building giving the whole place a sense of history and meaning the location is something only a bank could afford! The hotel offers comfortable rooms, modern in style and with bathrooms more spacious than at many mid-range hotels. Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel also has its own restaurants and English-speaking staff are available.

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

Intergate Kanazawa, Kanazawa
A stylish stay in central Kanazawa, Hotel Intergate blends modern comfort with local culture, including a Local Value Gallery and library showcasing Kanazawa's art, crafts and local knowledge. The Intergate Lounge offers local specialty coffee, happy-hour drinks, snacks, and late-night *ochazuke*, a rice dish, soaked in tea. This hotel also has its own public baths (shared, gender segregated).

Intergate Kyoto, Shijo Shinmachi, Kyoto
From the outside, Hotel Intergate Kyoto Shijo Shinmachi evokes the charm of a traditional townhouse, while inside, it offers a sleek, modern stay infused with elegant Japanese touches. Thoughtfully designed, its compact yet comfortable rooms feature soft lighting and natural materials, creating a tranquil retreat. The hotel's communal lounge is a particular highlight, offering complimentary refreshments throughout the day. A great base for exploring Kyoto, the hotel is within easy reach of the downtown Karasuma area, Nishiki Market, and the historic Gion district.

Laforet Club Hakone Gora Yunosumika, Hakone
We're sure your stay at Laforet will be one of the highlights of your trip. This Japanese-style hotel is in one of the best locations in Hakone, close to Gora station which has links by cable car and mountain railway to the rest of the area. The rooms here are very generously sized with modern

comforts like low beds, but with lovely Japanese design throughout. After a day of sightseeing, there's no better way to relax than by taking a soak in the communal *onsen* with indoor and outdoor pools.

Hyatt Regency Tokyo, Tokyo

Hyatt Regency Tokyo is a luxury hotel in Shinjuku offering stylish rooms, a fitness centre, eight restaurants, a spa and even an onsite convenience store. Based in Shinjuku, you couldn't be in a better-connected Tokyo spot.

Important Tour Information

Fitness

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

Dietary Requirements

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know in advance if you have any special dietary requirements and we 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.

En suite / shared facilities

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

Policy on single rooms

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

Double rooms

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

Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English speaker, now a resident of Japan and able to speak Japanese. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels, 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 bag for one night in Matsumoto, one night in Kanazawa and two nights in Hakone. You will need a small overnight bag (e.g. backpack) for use when we forward our main bags to the next location.

Transport on tour

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

International Flights

This tour starts and finishes in Tokyo for arrivals and departures at Tokyo Narita Airport or Tokyo Haneda Airport. Please note that the included meet and greet, shared shuttle 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. Check-in will be at three or four in the afternoon for most accommodations. 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. We recommend booking at least one extra night to check in and relax before the tour begins.

