



## Discover Japan Tour Dossier

Classic Tour | 14 Days | Moderate

Tokyo – Yatsugatake – Takayama – Kanazawa – Kyoto – Wakayama - Osaka

Japan is a country of contrasts, where ancient gods rub shoulders with modern technology, skyscrapers give way to paddy fields and crowds disperse into tranquillity of a classical garden. This tour is the perfect introduction to this fascinating archipelago.

### Tour Highlights:

**Tokyo** - Explore Japan's modern, yet traditional capital city

**Takayama** - Immerse yourself in this small town which was cut off from the rest of Japan for centuries

**Kyoto** - Japan's spiritual heart and famous temples and shrines

**Koya-san** - The centre of the Shingon sub-section of Buddhism

**Osaka** - Take in the sights and sounds of this food mecca



## Discover Japan tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides

*Personal expenditures e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary are at your own expense.*

## Classic Tours

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Japan on an excellent value group tour travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you will travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## Moderate

'Discover Japan' is a **moderate** tour. Tours that require a higher level of fitness and may include standard activities and longer periods of sightseeing. Easy walking, high altitude and overnight train journeys may feature.

- On several days there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time, often involving steps or uneven ground.

Anyone with a good level of fitness should be able to complete this itinerary. Of course, our National Escort/Local Guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. Please refer to your Travel Guide for more information.

## Country Profile: Japan

Japan is a fascinating country situated in northeast Asia. It is comprised of more than 4,000 islands - the main four being Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku. The Japanese name for Japan is 'Nippon' or 'Nihon' meaning 'sun origin' and is often translated as 'Land of the Rising Sun'. It is a country of contrasts; engaging a combination of futuristic cities, ancient culture and diverse scenery. Japan is famous for its relatively short Cherry Blossom season.

## Itinerary Changes

1. It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.
2. Changes have been made to the 2017 itinerary to improve customers experience while on the group. These changes are:
  - One night has been removed from Tokyo and replaced with a night in Yatsugatake (overnight stop in between Mt Fuji and Matsumoto) to relax the pace of the tour. This will make the drive to Matsumoto much shorter and the touring will be at a more comfortable pace.
  - The visit to the wasabi farm on day 5 has been changed to a visit to a sake brewery.
  - The dinner in Dotonburi on Day 12, has been changed to a lunch in Osaka Dotonburi. This will give the passengers time to change before their farewell dinner.

## Joining Your Tour

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo and end the tour on Day 13 in Osaka. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## Important Information Regarding Itinerary Changes and Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our Japan office on **+81 03 6895 8377 (24 hours)** to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in Japan. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in Japan as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival time.

## Discover Japan Itinerary

### DAYS 1- 2: AUSTRALIA TO TOKYO

Fly overnight with Cathay Pacific Airways to Tokyo, the capital of Japan and transfer approximately 1 and a half hours to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to explore the city until an informal welcome dinner tonight. Group members arriving late in the evening may miss dinner.

*Brisbane passengers may depart on Day 2.*

*Please note: Early check-in is not included today, if your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this please speak to your reservations consultant. . Meals will be at your own discretion until your welcome dinner tonight.*

### Destination Information

**Tokyo** - One of the world's most cutting edge capital cities, Tokyo is a city of contrasts, famous for its neon-lit landscape, towering skyscrapers, peaceful shrines and lovingly tended gardens. Although long the political and cultural centre of Japan, Tokyo became the official capital when the Meiji Emperor moved it to Tokyo in 1867.

### DAY 3: VIBRANT TOKYO

Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its frantic, high-tech frontage and you will find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore. Head to the top of the Tokyo Skytree for panoramic views over the city before taking a wander through the district of Asakusa and stop at the Senso-ji Temple. Visit the Imperial Plaza and

the peaceful Hamarikyu Gardens. You will be on your feet for 4-5 hours during your touring in Tokyo.

Enjoy your evening meal whilst cruising 1 hour along Tokyo Bay. You will need to get on and off your boat this evening for your cruise along Tokyo Bay.

### Destination Information

**Tokyo Skytree** - Tokyo Skytree is the tallest structure in Japan and the tallest tower in the world. Tokyo Skytree is predominantly a television and radio broadcast tower and is earthquake resistant.

**Senso-ji Temple** - An ancient Buddhist Temple and the oldest in Tokyo. The temple was originally founded in the 7th century. The temple adorns an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

**Imperial Plaza** - Is the main residence of the Emperor of Japan. Built on the original site of Edo Castle, the Plaza is made up of a palace, museum and large park.

**Hamarikyu Gardens** - A beautiful example of Japanese garden style which sits at the mouth of the Sumida River.

#### **DAY 4: TOKYO – MT FUJI**

This morning there will be an early start transferring to the station for the bullet train to Odawara. Your Bullet train ride will be approximately 30 minutes, on arrival transfer to tranquil Lake Ashi. Take a cruise across the lake before taking the Komagatake cable car for spectacular views of Mt Fuji and the lake below. Continue by coach to Japan's most iconic landmark - Mt Fuji. Start at the 5th Station for breathtaking views of Fuji. Please note travelling to the 5th station at Mt Fuji is only possible if weather conditions permit it. Next visit Mt Fuji Visitor Centre for a wealth of information on the mountain and the Five Lakes area. Drive a further 1 hour and 30 minutes to check into your hotel in Yatsugatake for one nights stay.

*Please note that your luggage will be transferred separately from your hotel in Tokyo to your hotel in Takayama so you will need to pack an overnight bag for tonight.*

#### **Destination Information**

**Mt Fuji** - At 3,776m, Mt Fuji is the highest of Japan's mountains and an iconic symbol of the country. Mount Fuji is notoriously shy and is often enveloped by clouds.

#### **DAY 5: TRAVEL TO TAKAYAMA**

This morning drive 2 hours to Nagano to explore the formidable 16th century Matsumoto Castle. There are steep ladder-style steps in the Matsumoto Castle that you must climb up and back down again. If you choose not to look inside the castle, you can enjoy the surrounding gardens, moat and architecture of Matsumoto Castle. After lunch you will stop at a sake brewery to learn about the process of making Japan's most revered liquor, before travelling a further 2 and half hours to Takayama, nestled high in the mountainous Hida region.

#### **Destination Information**

**Matsumoto Castle** - Known as the 'crow castle' due to its dark black exterior, the Matsumoto castle dates back to the 16th century and is the oldest wooden castle in Japan.

**Takayama** - Boasting one of Japan's most atmospheric townscapes, the layout of the town dates back to the 17th century and is home to much Meiji architecture.

#### **DAY 6: TAKAYAMA**

Head to the Miyagawa Morning Market where you can sample some of the delicious local fruits and vegetables (at your own expense). Later take a leisurely wander round the traditional houses of the area and visit the local museums stopping at Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition

Hall, Kusakabe Folk Museum, Takayama Jinya and Kamisannomachi Street. You will spend approximately 5 hours on foot today sightseeing around the town of Takayama.

#### **Destination Information**

**Miyagawa Morning Market** - Occurring each morning, there are a number of stalls selling fresh vegetables, local craft works and local food products.

**Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall** - Housing the floats from the Takayama Festival, which dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall is a great introduction to the cultural celebrations of Takayama.

**Kusabe Folk Museum** - A former house for a wealthy merchant named Kusakabe. The house is typical of the style during the Edo Period, with dark wooden beams and pillars.

**Takayama Jinya** - A former government office dating back to the Edo Period and the only one of its type still remaining. The main work of the office was to handle legal cases and tax collection.

#### **DAY 7: CHARMING SHIRAKAWA-GO VILLAGE**

Travel 1 hour and 30 minutes to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Shirakawa-go, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. You will spend 1 and half hours on foot exploring the area. There are some stairs in the house to climb if you want to explore the higher levels. Continue 1 hour to try your hand at making washi paper this afternoon before driving 1 and half hours to Kanazawa, where you will visit the Nomura Samurai House.

#### **Destination Information**

**Shirakawa-go** - Alongside Goyakama, Shirakawa-go is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its unusual architectural style known as gassho-zukuri. The roofs of these houses are tilted at an almost vertical angle.

**Washi Paper** - Washi paper is a type of Japanese paper made from the fibres of bark. This type of paper is commonly used in the art of origami.

**Kanazawa** - The capital of the Ishikawa Prefecture and is known for its beautiful samurai and geisha districts, as well as its stunning Kenrokuen Garden.

**Nomura Samurai Family House** - A restored Samurai residence with a beautiful garden. Nomura was a high-ranked samurai of the Meiji Period.

#### **DAY 8: TRAVEL TO KYOTO**

This morning wander through the beautiful Kenroku-en, one of the 'Three Great Gardens of Japan'. Visit the 21st century Museum of Contemporary Art. Sightseeing this morning will be approximately 3 hours. After lunch, drive 4 hours to Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital.

#### **Destination Information**

**Kenroku-en** - One of Japan's 'Three Great Gardens', Kenroku-en dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and is noticeable for its stunning beauty in all seasons.

**21st century Museum of Contemporary Art** - Opened in 2004, this museum is home to some of Japan's most fascinating modern art, with most pieces dating from the 1980s onwards.

**Kyoto** - Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years until 1867 when it was moved to Tokyo. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto and in nearby Nara, including old shrines and temples, screen paintings, beautiful gardens, and statues of Buddha.

#### **DAY 9: KYOTO TEA CEREMONY**

Start the day with a visit to the Ryoan-ji Temple and Kinkaku-ji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion, due to its gold-like exterior. You will spend approximately 3 hours at the temples. After lunch learn traditional Japanese handicrafts such as origami and enjoy the art of a traditional tea ceremony.

#### **Destination Information**

**Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion)** - A Buddhist temple and is an excellent example of Japanese garden design. The structure is a brilliant golden hue colour and is very minimalistic.

**Ryoan-ji Temple** - A Zen temple which is renowned for its garden which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles.

#### **DAY 10: NARA**

Drive 1 hour to Nara, the former imperial capital, and visit Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest wooden structure and home to Japan's largest Buddha. Also visit Isuein Gardens, known for its natural ponds, sightseeing here will be about 3 hours on foot. Return to Kyoto, stopping en route at the

mesmerising Fushimi Inari Shrine. The Fushimi Inari Shrine goes from the bottom to the top of Mount Inari (233m high). We will only walk up part of the mountain; there are some steep steps and the incline allows a steady-paced walk.

#### **Destination Information**

**Nara** - Home to 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Nara is a rewarding destination and a great spot for Japanese culture.

**Todai-ji Temple** - A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Todai-ji Temple is one the Seven Great Temples of Japan and is home to the world's largest bronze statue, Daibutsu.

**Fushimi Inari Shrine** - The Fushimi Inari is a corridor of red tori shrines which stretch through the thick woods of Mount Inari, a truly remarkable sight.

#### **DAY 11: KYOTO – KOYASAN TO WAKAYAMA**

This morning, drive 3 hours and 30 minutes to Koyasan, the centre of Shingon Buddhism. Visit the Kongobu-ji Temple and Garan temple complex. Next see Okunoin, Japan's largest cemetery and is home to the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi, founder of Shingon Buddhism. The walk through Okunoin Cemetery to the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi is roughly 2km and sometimes you will be walking over uneven surfaces. Continue a further 2 hours to Wakayama to check in to your hotel.

#### **Destination Information**

**Koyasan** - Known primarily as the centre of the Shingon sub-section of Buddhism, Koyasan sits in the mountains and is the ideal spot to take a glimpse of Japan's traditional religious life.

**Kongobu-ji Temple** - Dating back to 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Kongobu-ji Temple is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. The interior of the building is adorned with paintings of cranes and there are sliding doors throughout.

**Garan Temple** - Is a compound of seven halls, the ideal number of halls in Buddhism. The main sight of worship is in front of the Cosmic Buddha.

**Okunoin Cemetery** - Home to Kobo Daishi's mausoleum (founder of Shingon Buddhism), Okunoin Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Japan, with over 200,000 tombstones, as many wished to be buried near Kobo Daishi.

#### **DAY 12: OSAKA CASTLE**

Travel to 1 hour and 30 minutes to Osaka, Japan's largest city, and visit Osaka Castle. Next, take a stroll around the Dotonbori district, a restaurant mecca, where you can sample delicious local delicacies before taking a 1 hour cruise along the Yodogawa River. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure before a farewell dinner this evening.

#### **Destination Information**

**Osaka** - Japan's third largest city. What Osaka lacks in sightseeing locations, it makes up for with its flamboyance, fun loving people and amazing food.

**Osaka Castle** - One of Japan's most famous castles known for sweeping views of the city from its hilltop perch. Construction began in 1583 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who intended that, the castle was to become the centre of a new, unified Japan under his rule.

#### **DAY 13: DEPART OSAKA**

This morning is free at leisure before you transfer to the airport for your return flight home.

*Due to flight schedules, Perth passengers may arrive home on Day 13.*

*Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late checkout is not included in our Discover Japan tour. If you wish to book a late checkout for your final day in Kyoto, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.*

#### **DAY 14: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA**

Arrive home today.

### **DISCOVER JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION**

#### **Visas**

Passports must be valid for six months beyond the length of stay. Visas are not required for Australian passport holders for entry into Japan for stays of up to 90 days.

#### **Insurance**

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

#### **Eating in Japan**

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, most famous being Udon and Soba. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure. Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Japan. Food is an important element of Japanese culture. It is a time for families and friends to come together and much of family life revolves around the dinner table. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get practicing as cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Breakfast will be buffet style. Lunches are mostly pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually buffet-style, featuring a wide selection of high quality Japanese and Western dishes. We usually find this style of dining suits the wide and varied tastes of our customers on tour. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes. All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available.

On some days where many sights are covered, dinner times may be early and your tour group may head directly to the restaurant after sightseeing without stopping at your hotel to freshen up.

## Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. In the Fuji Five Lakes area, hotels tend to be more traditional in style and culture. In this area, you may be asked to take your shoes off at the door and store them in a secure locker – this is very traditional Japanese culture.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Japan. Please note that in Japan hotel rooms are renowned for being small and rooms booked for single use are usually smaller than a standard double or twin room, contain one small double bed (or one single bed), and are designed for one person to use. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Hotels in Japan often do not have porters and you will be required to carry your own luggage. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/local guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your National Escort. Tea and coffee facilities are not always available in hotels in Japan, so bring your own supply of coffee and tea bags.

## Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in Japan are extremely well maintained and are comparatively smooth with the rest of Asia.

**Trains:** Japan's transport system is well known for being efficient, clean and convenient. We like to make sure that you get the opportunity to travel with the locals, making use of the city's world-renowned bullet trains that will whizz you from city to city in no time. When taking the bullet train (Shinkansen) your main luggage will be transported separately due to limited space on the train. We recommend you pack a small overnight bag to take with you on the bullet train, which includes a change of clothes and other necessary items including any medication that is required.

Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Japan and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

## Development in Japan

Japan is a developed country and as such matches the west in modernity and technological advances. Japan is an extremely safe country and takes great responsibility in maintaining high safety standards.

## Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.



## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 29 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping is not a practiced custom in Japan. For this reason, tipping is not compulsory or included in the price of our Japan group tours. If you feel your National Escort has provided excellent service, you may (at your own discretion and expense) provide them with a tip at the end of your tour. When travelling around Japan, you should resist the temptation to let someone 'keep the change' or to tip wait staff, bar staff, taxi drivers or bellboys as this may lead to confusion.

## Packing List and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

## Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

## Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling to cities outside of Tokyo. US Dollars and Australian Dollars can be exchanged at Narita Airport and in some hotels, provided the Australian currency is new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be very limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

## Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AUD\$250 should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

## Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.



People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

## Cultural Differences

Japanese society and culture is built on intricate social etiquette and customs. As foreigners, we are not expected to be knowledgeable about all etiquette, but it will make your time in Japan more enjoyable if you are respectful of local customs. Some examples of scenarios you may encounter include removing your shoes and hats when entering a temple or house (some restaurants as well). You may be supplied with slippers at some places, but please come prepared with plenty of clean socks with no holes, and shoes that are easy to take off for the fairly regular occasions when they must be removed. Your National Escort will advise you of some of these other customs at the beginning of your tour.

## Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au).

## Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

## After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

**Updated: 24 May 2017**