



Highlights of Japan

Solo Tour | 12 Days | Physical Level 1

Osaka – Nara – Kyoto - Mount Fuji – Tokyo

Uncover Japan's best-known cities, discover the hidden treasures of Koya-san and Nara and view majestic Mt Fuji. There will also be time at leisure to further explore on your own or with your newfound friends.

- Explore historic Himeji & Nara
- Head to holy Koya-san
- Discover delightful Kyoto
- Admire beautiful Mt Fuji
- Be amazed in bustling Tokyo



Highlights of Japan tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated on your itinerary
- Sightseeing and entrance fees as stated on your itinerary
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, meals not included, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Solo Tours:

Designed exclusively for customers travelling solo, these tours provide a ready-made group of like-minded travellers to enjoy your holiday with. You will be looked after all the way by an expert guide who will involve you in the group activities discovering the sights and experiencing cultural activities. A room of your own is guaranteed with no supplement to pay.

Physical Level 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘Highlights of Japan’ is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it’s more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You’ll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- On several days, there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time, often involving steps or uneven ground
- You will be required to get on and off the boat on Lake Ashi without assistance

Of course, our National Escort will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

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.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 12 days in duration including international flights. Please note that due to airline schedules passengers may depart or arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on ‘Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to

reservations. Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo and end the tour on Day 11 in Osaka. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

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.

- The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. For this reason, we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only in the following section. Your National Escort or Local Guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them

Itinerary – Highlights of Japan

Days 1-2: Fly to Osaka

Fly overnight to the lively, fast-paced city of Osaka. On arrival you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transferred to your hotel.

Please note: Early check in is not included. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your reservations consultant. Transfers will differ depending on group size, but you may share a coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour. If you are on a shared bus transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to your hotel.



Destination Information

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

Day 3: Himeji

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Start exploring Japan today with a visit to Himeji. In the morning, travel around 2 hours by coach and on arrival visit the city's magnificent feudal-era fort, before strolling through Koko-en, a classical Japanese garden. Himeji Castle is largely in its original condition so please be mindful of your step when walking around. You will have to remove your shoes before walking along some of the wooden floors and there are some steep wooden steps to reach certain areas. After the reopening in March 2015, Himeji Castle has welcomed a large number of visitors. As such, they now issue numbered tickets to enter the Main Keep in order to limit the number of people who can enter, reducing congestion, waiting time and to protect the cultural properties. Please note this means that there may be cases where some visitors are not allowed to enter the Main Keep, however, there are many other parts of the castle to explore. After lunch in a local restaurant, return to Osaka. This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner with your fellow travellers.



Please note: There will be a fair amount of walking today, including a large number of steps.

Destination Information

Himeji Castle – Widely considered Japan's most magnificent castle for its imposing size and beauty, the well-preserved Himeji castle is both a national and world heritage listed treasure. Himeji Castle has never been destroyed by war, earthquake or fire and survives to this day as one of the country's twelve original castles.

Koko-en Garden – Koko-en is a Japanese style garden consisting of nine separate, walled gardens designed in various styles of the Edo Period.

Day 4: Koya-san

Meals included: Breakfast

This morning, transfer around 2.5 hours to the holy mountain of Koya-san, home to a cluster of over a hundred monasteries nestled in a valley enclosed by peaks. Visit Kongobuji Temple and wander around Okunoin. Continue around 2.5 hours to the charming city of Nara, Japan's first capital. The rest of the day is free at leisure.



Destination Information

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

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

Kongobuji Temple – Dating back to the 16th Century, the Kongobuji Temple is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. The interior is adorned with paintings of cranes and there are sliding doors throughout.

Nara – Due to Nara's past as the first permanent capital, it remains full of historic treasures, including 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Day 5: Nara - Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Stroll through Nara Park to Todaiji Temple, meeting the resident sika deer en-route, before exploring Isui-en Garden. Proceed around 1 hour by road to Kyoto and start exploring this lovely city with visits to Kinkakuji Temple, known as the 'Golden Pavilion', and the Zen garden at Ryoanji Temple. Check in to your Kyoto hotel and enjoy the evening at leisure.



Destination Information

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

Isui-en Garden – Isui-en is an attractive Japanese garden divided into two parts, a front garden and a rear garden, with a number of tea houses scattered throughout. The front garden dates back to the mid-17th century, while the rear garden, the larger of the two, was built in 1899 by a wealthy merchant.

Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – Kinkakuji Temple is a Buddhist temple and is an excellent example of Japanese garden design. The structure is a brilliant golden hue colour and is very minimalistic.

Ryoanji Temple – Ryoanji Temple is a Zen temple which is renowned for its garden which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles.

Day 6: Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast

An interesting morning awaits as you take part in some traditional Japanese activities. Experience the age-old rituals of a tea ceremony, before a session of Zen meditation at the lovely Kodaiji Temple. Depart Kodaiji in tranquil state of mind and return to your hotel, where the rest of the day is at leisure.



Destination Information

Kodaiji Temple – Kodaiji, established in 1606, belongs to the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism and feature richly decorated interiors and is surrounded by beautiful Zen gardens.

Day 7: Kyoto - Hakone

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

This morning, transfer to Kyoto station and take the super-fast bullet train to the Hakone area, a journey of around 2 hours. In Hakone, board a coach to explore the beautiful area. Take a boat cruise on Lake Ashi before soaring high on the Komagatake Ropeway for gorgeous Fuji views. There is free time in Hakone before a dinner with the group in the evening.



Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for tonight as your main luggage will be transferred this morning to your Tokyo hotel.

For May departures only: Instead of spending free time in Hakone, a visit to the Fuji Shibazakura Festival has been included. This is the best time of the year and one of the most scenic places in Japan to see the pink moss phlox in full bloom.

Destination Information

Hakone – Situated next to picturesque Lake Ashi, Hakone is a pleasant town, popular with weary Tokyoites looking for a break from the city and a great overnight stop after visiting Mount Fuji.

Lake Ashi – Formed after Mount Hakone's last eruption 3000 years ago, Lake Ashi is the symbol of Hakone and on a clear day offers spectacular views of Mount Fuji in the distance.

Day 8: Mt Fuji

Meals included: Breakfast

Travel approximately 1 hour to Mt Fuji and ascend by road to Fuji's 5th Station, about half way up the volcano's slope, for spectacular mountain vistas. Please note it is only possible to reach the 5th station if weather permits. After lunch, transfer around 3 hours to Tokyo, Japan's dazzling capital city, where you can spend the evening exploring this fascinating metropolis.



Destination Information

Mount Fuji – At 3,776m, Mount 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.

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. It was the political and cultural centre of Japan, before it became the official capital in 1867 when the Meiji Emperor moved it.

Day 9: Explore Tokyo

Meals included: Breakfast

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. Today, take a half-day tour by coach of this fascinating city. Head to the 1st observatory of the 634-metre Tokyo Skytree for panoramic views over the city before wandering through the district of Asakusa and visiting Sensoji Temple. Continue to the peaceful Hamarikyu Garden and stroll through the classical landscapes. The rest of the afternoon and evening is at leisure.



Destination Information

Tokyo Skytree – 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.

Sensoji Temple – Sensoji Temple is 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.

Hamarikyu Garden – Hamarikyu Garden is a beautiful example of Japanese garden style which sits at the mouth of the Sumida River.

Day 10: Tokyo

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Today is a free day for you to spend as you wish; your guide will be on hand to give options and ideas. In the evening, get together for your final meal as a group where you can share memories and highlights of the tour.

**Days 11-12: Tokyo**

Meals included: Breakfast

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

Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not included in our Highlights of Japan tour. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in Tokyo, please contact our reservations department who can confirm the additional price and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.



Transfers: In the event that your flight departs outside of the majority group departure time, you will be transferred to the airport by a shared coach (not with other Wendy Wu Tours passengers). If you are on a shared coach transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to the coach.

Please inform our reservations team of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking.

Highlights of 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 mostly be buffet style but may be a set-menu. 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, but may occasionally be a set-menu. 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. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in Australia.

On some days where lots of 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.

Evenings at leisure

To give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on this tour, we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that Japan has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your hotel. Your National Escort will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense).

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.

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 and bathrooms are renowned for being small. Standard single rooms 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 can't be guaranteed.

Porterage

Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in Japan. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

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 compared with the rest of Asia.

Bullet trains: Second class reserved seats are booked for our groups on bullet trains; there will be toilet facilities on board. Due to the limited space on bullet trains, a separate luggage transfer service will be arranged for all suitcases. You will need to pack a separate overnight bag to carry on the train as your suitcase will not arrive until the following day after a bullet train journey. Your guide will indicate when you will need to prepare for this throughout your tour.

Air: Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

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.

Cultural Difference

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 spare socks, 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.

Public Holidays in Japan

If you are travelling within the below Japan Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. Showa Day is on 29th April, Constitution Memorial Day is on May 6th and Emperor's Birthday is on 23rd December every year.

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 18 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.

Tipping Policy

Although tipping in Japan is not customary, if you feel you have received an excellent service, please feel free to tip your guide at your discretion.

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

Luggage

All travelers 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 five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

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

Personal Expense - 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 \$250AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. In your Final Documentation an Optional Excursion Sheet will be included outlining the activities available in each city and local cost associated. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

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 defense 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. 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.

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

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with 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 followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Last updated: August 22, 2019