



One of the World's most cutting-edge capitals, Tokyo is a city of contrasts. Famous for its cutting edge modernity, neon-lit landscape and towering skyscrapers, it is also home to sprawling parkland, peaceful shrines and temples and lovingly tended gardens. Despite its love affair with manga pop culture, fashion, high-tech trends and conspicuous consumption, below the surface is a city that has its roots in an ancient heritage. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples stand close to skyscrapers as a reminder of a more contemplative time and at the heart of the hyperactive center lies the serene Imperial Palace, the home of the ruling emperor that provides a tangible link to the city's historical past.

Behind the shopping, entertainment and commercial emporia can be found quaint wooden houses, private gardens with meticulously clipped bonsai trees and the Zen-like calm of the Hamarikyu Gardens. The city's reputation as a mega-expensive metropolis is ill conceived and visitors can take advantage of inexpensive izakaya bars and neighborhood cafes that serve delicious noodles and rice dishes.

At your arrival at Narita airport, an assistant will greet you and hand you your documents for the trip and a private transfer will bring you to your hotel in Tokyo. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Meals included: None

Accommodation: Mandarin Oriental – Executive Suite

Day 2: Tokyo full day tour by private upgraded car

Take a day tour of this fascinating city with a local guide. The day begins with a visit to **Meiji Shrine**, a shrine dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings. Take a walk down **Omotesando** shopping street, a broad tree lined avenue home to the flagship stores of the world's top fashion brands.

Head across town to **Asakusa**, Tokyo's old town where you can soak in the atmosphere of the Tokyo of old. Visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple and wander down Nakamise, a shopping street that has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional, local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries.



End your day in **Hamarikyu garden**, an Edo Period Japanese garden surrounded by the Shiodome district's futuristic skyscrapers, a great example of how Japan is the land of contrasts, where you will stop for a cup of steaming matcha and Japanese sweets in a tea house on a small island in the park's lake.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 8 hours

Accommodation: Mandarin Oriental – Executive Suite

Day 3: Tokyo full day art and culture tour by private upgraded car

A comprehensive immersion into Japan's rich art and cultural heritage.



Today will start with a lesson in **Iaido**, a form of Japanese swordsmanship. Iaido's emphasis is on precise, controlled, fluid motion, and is sometimes referred to as 'moving Zen'. You allowed to practice actual cutting techniques on bamboo or straw blocks forms using real Iaido swords.

Time to put down the sword and take up the pen as we have a lesson in shodo, **Japanese calligraphy**. You will learn how, when writing kanji (Japanese pictographs), each stroke has a proper way to begin and end and there is a correct order and path to follow. The slightest lapse in concentration will show in one's work.

Last, head to Shinjuku's **Samurai Museum**. The Museum, located in a traditional Japanese building nicely contrasting with the neon jungle of Shinjuku, hosts an incredible collection of armor, swords and objects that belonged to samurai warriors throughout the ages. You will be collected and dropped off at your hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 8 hours

Accommodation: Mandarin Oriental – Executive Suite

Day 4: Travel from Tokyo to Hakone by (shinkansen)bullet train

You will be picked up by private car and taken to Tokyo Station to catch a bullet train to Odawara (Hakone). From Tokyo Station take a bullet train to Odawara Station – you will be riding in green class. On arrival into Odawara a driver will meet you and take you to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast and Dinner

Guide: None

Accommodation: Gora Kadan – Japanese room with private (Matsu) outdoor bath

Day 5: Hakone & Mt Fuji full day tour by private upgraded car

Today, you will be picked up by your driver and guide for a full day tour of Hakone and Mt Fuji.

To explore the National Park, you can take advantage of the numerous forms of transport on offer. Ride the world's second longest cable car up **Mt Owakudani**, passing over sulfurous fumes, hot springs and hot rivers in this volcanic area, where you can eat an egg hard boiled in the sulfuric hot springs which make Hakone famous. If you do, it will add seven years to your life! A majestic replica pirate ship will sweep you across the **Lake Ashinoko**, a lake formed by a volcanic eruption 3000 years ago, and the Hakone Tozan 'switchback train' zig zags through the mountains, giving amazing views of the surrounding valleys. Throughout the day you will have the chance to get a glimpse of Mt Fuji, however please keep in mind that she is a notoriously shy mountain and it needs to be a clear day.

At the end of the tour your driver will drop you back at your hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast and Dinner

Guide: 8 Hours

Accommodation: Gora Kadan – Japanese room with private (Matsu) outdoor bath

Day 6: Transfer to Kanazawa

Kanazawa

During the Edo Period, Kanazawa served as the seat of the Maeda Clan, the second most powerful feudal clan after the Tokugawa in terms of rice production and fief size. Accordingly, Kanazawa grew to become a town of great cultural achievements, rivalling Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo).

During World War II, Kanazawa was Japan's second largest city (after Kyoto) to escape destruction by air raids. Consequently, parts of the old castle town, such as the Nagamachi samurai district and chaya entertainment districts, have survived in good condition. Today,

Kanazawa remains an important city in its region and serves as the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture. The city boasts many historical attractions such as restored residences and districts, as well as modern museums. But Kanazawa's unchallenged main attraction is Kenrokuen, one of Japan's "three best landscape gardens".



From Hakone, you will be transferred to Odawara station by private car and take the world famous Shinkansen bullet train, which reaches speeds of up to 300km/h. You will be riding in green class. You will then have a change in Tokyo to another shinkansen that will whisk you up to Kanazawa. On arrival into Kanazawa Station a driver will meet you and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: None

Accommodation: Nikko Kanazawa – Luxury Floor Deluxe King

Day 7: Kanazawa full day tour by private car.

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A full day to explore Kanazawa with a local guide. The highlight of any visit to Kanazawa is **Kenroku-en garden**. Ranked one of the top three in Japan, its breathtaking beauty shines through in any season. You will also be visiting the imposing Kanazawa castle, located next to the garden. Nearby **Kagayuzen Kaikan** offers demonstrations of the centuries-old Yuzen silk painting technique.

Head to visit the **Nagamachi Samurai district**, where you can enter the **Nomura Samurai House**, a traditional Japanese home with tea-ceremony room, an interior courtyard garden and artifacts from the Edo period. The **Higashi Chaya District** is the largest and by far the most interesting of Kanazawa's Geisha Districts. Many of the buildings along the central street now house cafes and shops. One of the shops, **Hakuza**, sells gold leaf products, a specialty of Kanazawa, and displays a kura warehouse style room which is completely covered in gold leaf; you will also have a chance to visit the **Shima teahouse**, which is still an operating tea house, but opens its doors to the public. You can enjoy a cup of green tea here to finish the day. You will be dropped back at your hotel after the tour.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 8 Hours

Accommodation: Nikko Kanazawa – Luxury Floor Deluxe King

Day 8: Transfer to Kyoto

***Kyoto** This is a must-see destination in Japan. Kyoto is the nation's former capital and was the residence of the emperor from 794 until 1868. With 2,000 religious buildings, including 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, as well as palaces, gardens and associated architecture, it is one of the best-preserved cities in Japan and has 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites. Kyoto represents the "Japan of old" and beyond the high-rise skyscrapers built as a monument to progress, the real monument to Japan's historical and cultural past can be*



found in the city's narrow alleyways where tea houses abound and kimono-clad geisha hurry from elegant function to function.

Today, you will be picked up by private car and taken to Kanazawa Station where you will board a shinkansen to Kyoto in green class. On arrival at Kyoto Station a driver will be waiting for you to take you to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy your fantastic hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: None

Accommodation: Ritz Carlton – Kamogawa Suite

Day 9: Kyoto full day highlights tour by private upgraded car

Today you explore the former imperial capital with a knowledgeable local guide, utilizing Kyoto's comprehensive bus system to visit some of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites.

You will start your day with a visit to **Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion)**, which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun. After his death it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples. **Nijo Castle** is an ornamental castle built by the founder of the Edo Shogunate as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by



stunning surrounding gardens. The main building was completed in 1603, and is famous for its architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors.

Take a walk down **Nishiki Market**, a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. Known as "Kyoto's Kitchen", this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi.

To end the day you can decide what to visit. You will visit **Sanjusangendo**, a temple which is Japan's longest wooden structure (120m). It is famous for its 1001 statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. In the center of the main hall sits a large, wooden statue of a 1000-armed Kannon that is flanked on each side by 500 statues of human sized 1000-armed Kannon standing in ten rows. Together they make for an awesome sight. At the end of the tour you will be taken back to your hotel where you can enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 8 Hours

Accommodation: Ritz Carlton – Kamogawa Suite

Day 10: Kyoto private geisha teahouse experience by private car

This evening you will be picked up by a car and taken to explore the back streets of Kyoto's geisha districts with the leading foreign geisha culture expert, Peter MacIntosh who has spent half his life living in Kyoto. He was married to an ex-geisha, studies Japanese arts and is a lecturer on Geisha

Studies at a Kansai University He will discuss the history as well as the present situation of the flower and willow world of Kyoto. All this will be preparing you for entertainment in a traditional geisha teahouse, or ochaya, which is a private, members only establishment. The maiko/geiko will answer any questions you have as well as perform a dance accompanied by the shamisen. Afterwards some traditional games will be played, followed by photo opportunities. All drinks and snacks are included.

Please note “teahouse” is the name of this style of buildings and does not include a tea ceremony, an art that is traditionally not practiced by geisha

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 2 Hours

Accommodation: Ritz Carlton – Kamogawa Suite

Day 11: Transfer to Osaka

Osaka

The historical commercial capital of Japan, Osaka is Japan's third largest metropolis and it has been the economic powerhouse of the Kansai region for centuries. Osaka first gained prominence when a powerful warlord built the country's most magnificent castle in the 16th century. To develop resources for his castle town, the ruler persuaded merchants from other parts of the nation to resettle in Osaka and it became an important distribution center. As the merchant class prospered, the town grew and traditional arts such as kabuki and bunraku flourished. With the legacy of the city's commercial beginnings still intact, Osaka is renowned as a hub for international business. It is also famous for its local cuisine, large aquarium, underground shopping arcade, and its popular Universal Studios amusement park.



This morning you will be picked by private car and taken to Kyoto Station where you will board a limited express train to Osaka. On arrival at Osaka Station you will be met by your driver and taken to start your full day tour of Osaka.

Start your day visiting the magnificent **Osaka Castle**. The castle is one of Japan's most famous, and played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century. It has been completely rebuilt, faithful to the original appearance, after its destruction during World War II; the inside is modern and functional and serves as a museum of Osaka history.

Next stop is the bustling district of **Dotonbori**, a former theater district turned restaurant mecca. You can sample the famous **takoyaki**, octopus dumpling, Osaka's most famous street food.

A few minutes' walk away you'll find the **Kamigata Ukiyoe museum**, to admire the famed Japanese prints from the 18th century. You'll have the chance to make your own woodblock print, too! (The Museum is closed on Mondays and will not be visited)



The Umeda Sky Building is a spectacular high-rise building in the Kita district of Osaka, near Osaka and Umeda Stations. The 173-meter-tall building consists of two main towers which are connected to each other by the "**Floating Garden Observatory**" on the 39th floor, and offers a great view of the city.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: 8 hours

Accommodation: St Regis Hotel – Grand Deluxe King

Day 12: Depart Japan

Today you will be escorted to Kansai airport in a private transfer.

Meals included: Breakfast

Guide: None

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