

JAPAN

ITINERARY

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Day 1 Arrival in Tokyo

Upon arrival to Tokyo's airport, our representative will be waiting to assist with your private transport into the city. After arriving at the hotel and checking in, the remainder of the day is free at leisure.

Overnight in Tokyo

Distance and journey time (approximation):

Narita International Airport (NRT) to Central Tokyo: 1.5 h

Haneda International Airport (HND) to Central Tokyo: 50 min

Meals included:

Breakfast

Service included:

Meet and greet at airport, by English speaking assistant

Transfer to Central Tokyo by Private car(Sedan Crown or Mercedes Benz, Max Capacity of 3 adults and 2 luggage).

Pasmo card with a value of 1500 JPY

This is a rechargeable, contactless smart card ticketing system. PASMO can be used in more than 100 transportation facilities including private railways, subways, and buses that accept PASMO.

Day 2 Tokyo

Meet up with the guide this morning at the hotel for the trip to **Hamarikyu**, a Japanese garden that once served as a private villa of a powerful feudal lord during the Edo period. Its wide collection of seasonal flowers makes it one of the most visited gardens in Tokyo, however its most attractive aspect is its teahouse called Nakajima-no-Ochaya.

Enjoy a break in the teahouse and a cup of freshly made green tea while the guide shares interesting facts about chado (tea ceremony).

From the park, take a scenic river cruise to **Asakusa**, a part of Tokyo's shitamachi or old town. Asakusa is the city's oldest Geisha district and also home to Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple. The streets around Senso-ji feature many traditional shops and are a delight to wander through.

The tour ends with a visit to **Meiji Jingu**, Tokyo's most famous shrine dedicated to Emperor Meiji and a popular venue for traditional Shinto weddings.

The shrine is also home to around 120,000 trees, making one forget that just outside its grounds are two of the city's popular shopping districts, Harajuku and Omotesando.

Optional experience:

Robot Restaurant

Hidden in an alleyway in Kabukicho, Shinjuku's red-light district, you will find one of Japan's most bizarre restaurants, the Robot Restaurant. Here you will witness an hour-long show of neon lights, techno music, colorful robots, and even glitzy dancers on stage! This show is definitely one-of-a-kind and can only be experienced in Tokyo.



Overnight in Tokyo

Time:

Start (guided tour): 9:00

Duration: 8 h

*including pick-up/drop-off and transit times

Meals included:

Breakfast

Service included:

8 hours service English speaking guide

Entrance fee and transfer by Private transportation (Sedan Rolls Royce) as mentioned in the program

Day 3 Mon: Tokyo

Your guide will meet you at your hotel and head by subway to Korakuen station, right next to Tokyo Dome. Here you will visit **Koishikawa Korakuen garden**, one of the most popular Japanese gardens in Tokyo. The construction of this garden started in 1629 and combines traditional Japanese and Chinese garden elements. Enjoy the garden's transformation into a colorful paradise in autumn, when the trees turn into a stunning array of colors.

After enjoying the art of the traditional Japanese garden, it is time to head towards Roppongi to enjoy some of the best modern art in the city. **Roppongi** is Tokyo's self-proclaimed art district and home to some of Japan's contemporary and innovative galleries and museums and a few modern skyscrapers.

Your first stop will be the **21_21 DESIGN SIGHT**. This design museum opened 2007 by architect Tadao Ando and fashion designer Issey Miyake. The museum lies on the edge of Hinokicho Park and is beautifully embedded in its natural surroundings. The changing exhibitions are directed under the supervision of the designers Issey Miyake, Taku Sato and Naoto Fukasawa. After this encounter with modern Japanese design it is time for a delicious and fresh tempura lunch.

Now it is time to visit one of the highlights of the day, the **Mori Art Museum**, located only a short walk away in the **Roppongi Hills** building. The museum is located in the 53rd floor of the Mori Tower and opened its doors in the year 2003. Since then it has gained a reputation of being one of the must-go-places for art-lovers in Tokyo. The exhibitions showcase not only modern art, but also photography, design, fashion, architecture and so on, encompassing all aspects of art in our daily lives. After strolling through the museum, do not miss the breathtaking nearly-360° from the "Mori Art Center Gallery".

After enjoying the vast variety of fascinating modern art in Roppongi, it is time for you to take the journey to your last stop of the day, **Shibuya**. Shibuya is one of the main shopping, dining, and entertainment districts in Tokyo. It is famous for its intersection called 'The Scramble', one of the world's busiest pedestrian lanes, and the statue of Hachiko, the most popular dog in Japan.

After taking in all the many impressions in busy and colorful Shibuya, your guide will take you back to your accommodation.

Time:

09:00 - 17:00

Duration: approx. 8 h

Overnight in Tokyo

Meals included:

Breakfast

Service included:

8 hours service English speaking guide

Entrance fee and transfer by Private transportation (Sedan Rolls Royce) as mentioned in the program

Day Tue: Tokyo, Ancient Katana sword making

PROGRAM DETAILS

Sword forging is one of the oldest, most famous and admired Japanese traditional crafts.

Developed throughout Japan's long feudal era, when the samurai class ruled the provinces of Japan, the country's fine swordsmith's techniques have been preserved and passed on from generation to generation and are still practiced nowadays.

One of the most famous family-owned swordsmith's ateliers with a history going back to centuries ago is Yoshiwara Yoshindo's laboratory. This is where some of Japan's finest swords are produced through a long and traditional process developed by his family.

Today your English-speaking guide will meet you at your hotel and will take you on a private tour of Yoshiwara's swordsmith atelier, located just outside of central Tokyo, in the North-East area of the city.

This is a very exclusive experience, as the laboratory is normally not accessible by the general public, and will be a rare chance for you to witness the authentic Japanese blacksmith techniques, as well as to go back in time and see how the production of these world-famous artifacts has developed throughout the ages.

Duration:
3 hours

Meals included:
Breakfast

Service included:
Private Transfer to the venue
Katana sword making experience with the venues mentioned in the program

Day 5 Tokyo - Hakone

Meet your guide at your hotel this morning for a guided tour in the Hakone.

You will first transfer by private car to Hakone Region from where you will be able to enjoy a guided day in the region.

Ride the Hakone Tozan switchback train that zigzags through the mountains and offers views of the surrounding valleys. Afterwards, ride the Guinness World Record-holder ropeway all the way up to **Mt. Owakudani**, passing over sulfurous fumes and hot springs.

From the mountain, take the ropeway bound for Togendai and ride the replica pirate ship that cruises along **Ashinoko**, a body of water that was formed after a volcanic eruption that occurred more than 3,000 years ago.

Hakone is also home to many museums and parks. One of these is the **Hakone Open Air Museum**. The museum is famous for its harmonic balance between nature and art, featuring a sizable Picasso Collection.

Note: The ropeway that goes to Mt. Owakudani has resumed operations but for safety reasons, hiking on the mountain is still prohibited.

Time:
09:00 - 17:00
Duration: approx. 8 h

The evening will be at your leisure to enjoy the Onsen (Japanese Hot Bath) available in your room.

Overnight in Hakone

Meals included:
Breakfast & dinner.

Service included:
2 days Hakone Free Pass (valid from Odawara Station)
8 hours service English speaking guide
Entrance fee and transfer by public transportation as mentioned in the program



Day 6: Hakone – Kyoto

It's time to start your journey to Kyoto, Japan's reigning cultural capital and home to 2,000 shrines and temples, including 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. You will be boarding the top-of-the-line, the *shinkansen* (bullet train) capable of reaching the speed of up to 330kph.

Arriving in Kyoto you will be met by your guide for a visit of the Fushimi Inari Shrine

One of the most unusual Shinto shrines in Japan, Fushimi Inari is composed by thousands of vermillion torii gates following trails inside the forests of Mt Inari.

The Shrine, also featured in "Memoirs of a Geisha", is very famous for the impressive contrast and mystical atmosphere created by the colors of the Torii and those of the surrounding nature.



The light hike up to the top of the mountain and back will take up to 3 hours and will grant the visitors numerous picture opportunities in this quite unique place.

From the top, a beautiful view of the city of Kyoto and the hills surrounding it can be enjoyed

You will then return to your hotel in Kyoto where the evening will be free at your leisure
Overnight in Kyoto

Meals included:
Breakfast.

Transfer time information:
Odawara Station to Kyoto Station: 2.5h

Service included:
Luggage Transfer service from Hakone Ryokan to Kyoto Hotel
Transfer from Hakone Yumoto to Odawara by Private car (Rolls Royce) and English speaking assistant to help with the transfer to Kyoto
One way Shinkansen ticket, Green car from Odawara Station to Kyoto Station.
4 hours service Spanish speaking guide
Entrance fee and transfer by Private transportation as mentioned in the program

Day 7 Kyoto

Today's tour starts with a visit to **Nijo Castle**, an ornamental castle that was originally built to serve as the private villa of a powerful feudal lord. The main building was completed in early 1600s and has since then been known for its Momoyama-style architecture, decorated sliding doors, and "chirping nightingale" floors.

Next on the list is the serene **Ryoan-ji Temple**, which is famous for its well-maintained rock garden and known to be the home of the Myoshinji School of the Rinzai Buddhist sect.



Just a short distance from Ryoan-ji is the stunning golden pavilion collectively known as **Kinkaku-ji Temple**. The temple grounds are relatively smaller than that of most temples and shrines in Kyoto, but what is undoubtedly impressive is the pavilion that is completely covered in handmade goldleaf.

A visit to **Kiyomizu-dera Temple** follows later in the day. The view from the 13-meter high building is indeed breathtaking and the fact that this veranda was built without using any nails or joiners is quite unbelievable.

The tour ends with a stroll along the busy streets of **Higashiyama district**, a collection of narrow alleyways lined with local stores, souvenir shops, small eateries, and even pottery centers.

Note: Kiyomizu-dera Temple is currently undergoing partial renovations.

Overnight in Kyoto

Time:
Start (guided tour): 09:00
Duration: 8 h
*including pick-up/drop-off and transit times

Meals included:
Breakfast

Service included:
8 hours service English speaking guide
Entrance fee and transfer by Private Car (Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) as mentioned in the program

Day 8 Kyoto, Cultural Experience, Afternoon Trip to Nara

Take a tour along Kyoto's spiritual trail. An early morning Zen meditation session calms the mind before visiting Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, learning how local life is interwoven with spirituality. Wrap up the day with a tea ceremony, a beautiful ritual deeply rooted in Zen Buddhism.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Awake early for a day of spiritual discovery in Kyoto. Join a local guide for a trip to a Zen Temple for the day's first enlightening experience- a course on Zen seated meditation. Learn how this practice, also called Zazen, led the Buddha to Enlightenment and is still a key part of daily life for many Japanese Buddhists. The instructor will demonstrate how to sit properly and give tips for how to regulate breathing and the thought process. Then try to put these techniques into practice with a meditation session.



Having calmed the mind, it is time to continue along Japan's spiritual trail. Tour a selection of temples, seeing local devotees deep in prayer. The guide will explain the subtle, yet important, differences between praying at a Shinto shrine and in a Buddhist temple while exploring these sacred sites.

The last experience on this spiritual day tour of Kyoto is a tea ceremony. Head to Gion, Kyoto's main geisha and entertainment district, and enter a traditional Japanese tea house. Meet with a local Tea Master who will provide a full explanation of Japanese tea as well as the tea ceremony itself. Learn about the long, fascinating history of this important ceremony and discover how it relates with Zen Buddhism. Following this background information, the tea ceremony will begin. Be enchanted by the graceful rituals of the ceremony, from the mindful pouring of the tea to the cleansing of the cups.

Following this insightful day out in Kyoto, return to the hotel or stay in Gion to explore more of the district's many wonders.

Overnight in Kyoto (travelers own arrangements)

Time:

Start (cultural activity): 09:30

Duration: 2 h

Meals included:

Breakfast

Service included:

8 hours service English speaking guide

Entrance fee and transfer by Private transportation(Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) as mentioned in the program

Day 9 Kyoto, Maiko transformation experience

Head out of town and travel to Nara with the included Japan Rail Pass. For 74 years during the 8th century, Nara was Japan's capital and many of the temples and shrines built at that time still remain.

Nara is just a small town, with most of its main tourist spots located around **Nara Park**, where a large amount of tame deer roam free. Visit **Todaiji Temple**, the world's largest wooden building housing Japan's largest Buddha, or **Kasuga Taisha**, Nara's most celebrated shrine.



In the evening return to Kyoto to for an exclusive dinner with a Maiko

Get an in-depth, exclusive look at Japan's Geisha culture in Kyoto. Late this afternoon join a guide for a walking tour of Gion, Kyoto's Geisha district, followed by a truly special dinner with a Maiko!

Start with an introduction, listening as the guide explains about Geiko, the local name for Kyoto's geishas, and their Maiko, or apprentices. Then explore the atmospheric streets, walking past local shops and restaurants on the way to Yasaka Shrine. From here continue to Hanami-koji where lavish tea shops line the roadside.

Carry on to a theatre where Geisha and Maiko perform traditional dances. Then cross Kyoto's famous Tatsumi Bashi Bridge, passing a legendary teahouse and small street shrine along the way. Arrive at Shirakawa Canal for a walk along the streets which are lined with cherry trees and brimming with charm. (Note: depending on the location of the restaurant, the walking tour may need to backtrack to one of the places mentioned above).

After the walking tour, enter a local restaurant for a memorable dinner in the company of a Maiko. Dine on a traditional multi-course meal called kaiseki ryori. Interact with the Maiko, learning about her craft and the world of Geisha. During dinner, the Maiko will entertain by performing traditional dances and teaching popular Japanese drinking games.

Pose for photos with the Maiko, capturing memories to share with friends and family back home, before bidding farewell to the hostess and returning to the hotel.

Duration: 10 h

Overnight in Kyoto

Meals included:
Breakfast & Dinner

Service included:
8 hours service English speaking guide
Entrance fee and transfer by Private transportation(Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) as mentioned in the program
Meeting with a Maiko experience including a Kaiseki traditional Japanese dinner

Day 10 Kyoto, Maiko transformation experience

Transform into Maiko or Geisha in Kyoto

Experience Japanese culture in style! An expert makeup artist will help you transform into a pretty maiko (apprentice geisha) or a geiko (geisha in Kyoto) and the kimono that you will try on is definitely one of Kyoto's finest as it's only made from Kyoto silk. After your makeover, you will then have a photoshoot led by one of Higashiyama's best photographers. Depending on your preference, you can either have it inside or outside a machiya (traditional Japanese house).

On the afternoon you will transfer with your guide to Osaka and visit Osaka Castle, one of the most visited places in the city for its history, architectural design, and cherry blossom trees all bloom in spring. Aside from the artifacts on display and the view of the city from its topmost floor, the surrounding garden and moats make the castle one of the must-see places in the city.

Overnight in Osaka

Meals included:
Breakfast

Service included:
Maiko transformation and photo shooting plan as mentioned in the program (instructor is English speaker however your guide will help with the translation during the experience)
English speaking guide (8 hours duration)
Entrance fees and private transportation (Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) as mentioned in the program.

Day 11 Osaka

Visit Osaka Castle, one of the most visited places in the city for its history, architectural design. Aside from the artifacts on display and the view of the city from its topmost floor, the surrounding garden and moats make the castle one of the must-see places in the city.

This is followed by a scenic cruise along Okawa River, which offers views of Nakanoshima Park and the red-bricked Osaka Central Public Hall. In spring, the riverbanks of Okawa are lined with cherry blossom trees, making the trip more spectacular.



Get off at Yodoyabashi Port and get on the train to Tenma, one of the local shopping districts more popular among the locals. From Tenma Station, pass through the narrow food alleys of Tenma Eki-mae Kita Hon-dori and the shopping street of Tenjinbashi-suji.

Last stop of the day in Dotonbori. Now known as one of the top destinations for food lovers, the region initially existed as a pleasure district, but now only provides gastronomic delights. This is a great place to sample the famous but deadly fugu fish, takoyaki (octopus dumplings) and the savory pancake okonomiyaki.

Overnight in Osaka

Meals included on this day: Breakfast

Service included

8 Hours English speaking guide

Entrance fee and Private(Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) transportation during the visits

Day 12 Osaka,

This morning meet your guide at the lobby of your hotel and travel to Yoshino by private car.

Yoshino and its surroundings are registered as a UNESCO World heritage, with its historical sites, such as the Kinpusenji temple, the Yoshimizu Shrine and the mythical Kinpu shrine. The beauty of Mount Yoshino can not only be experienced in spring, but throughout the seasons, with blooming Hydrangea in the summer months and colorful leaves in autumn.

After arriving at Yoshino, start your journey with a ride in Japan's oldest ropeway to reach Yoshinoyama Station. Follow your guide and visit Kinpusenji Temple, an ancient temple which is believed to have been built in the latter half of the 7th century by the Shugen-do sect of Buddhism.

Continue to Yoshimizu Shrine, also registered as UNESCO World Heritage, which is set in a beautiful natural landscape. Historically this shrine was used as a monastery for Buddhist monks of the Shugen-do sect, but changed to a Shinto shrine in the late 19th century.

Then, pay a visit to Kinpu Shrine, which enshrines the deity of Mt. Yoshino, the protector of gold mines. This shrine is located in a more remote area of Mt. Yoshino, in a beautiful and tranquil forest and is also famous for its flowers, blooming throughout the warmer months.

On your way to the ropeway station also visit the Mikumari Shrine with its main hall built in the unique style of Momoyama architecture.

After your visit to Mt. Yoshino, board the cable car and head to Osaka with your guide and chauffeur.

Distance and journey time (approximation):

Amanemu – Yoshino: 2.5 h (drive)

Yoshino – Osaka: 1 h 15 min (drive)

Meals included on this day: Breakfast

Service included

8 Hours English speaking guide

Entrance fee and Private transportation(Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus) during the visits

Day 13 Departure from Osaka

The rest of the day is at leisure until the scheduled transfer via private minivan Kansai International Airport.

Distance and journey time (approximation):

Central Osaka to Kansai International Airport (KIX): 1 h

Meals included:

Breakfast (Hotel breakfast service may not be available in case of an early transfer to airport)

Service included:

Transfer from Hotel to Kansai international airport by private transportation(Luxury Sedan Century or Lexus)

ACCOMMODATION

DELUXE OPTION

DATE IN	DATE OUT	CITY	HOTEL	CATEGORY	ROOM
March 3	March 7	Tokyo	Aman Tokyo	Super Deluxe	Premier Room (80 SQM)
March 7	March 8	Hakone	Gora Kadan	Super Deluxe	Annex Suite Room
March 8	March 13	Kyoto	Four Season Kyoto	Super Deluxe	Executive Suite Room (71 SQM)
March 13	March 15	Osaka	The St Regis Osaka	Super Deluxe	Grand Deluxe Suite Room (87 SQM)

Our Hotel Classifications: First Class Hotels - Generally 2-3 star. Superior Hotels - Generally 3+-4 star. Deluxe Hotels - Generally 4-5 star. Super Deluxe Hotels - Generally 5+-6 star.

