

Japan Vacation Specialists

**AJT**  
All Japan Tours

# Best of Japan Tour Summer (Reverse): Kyoto Gion Summer

12 days 11 nights

**US\$3898.00**

Tour Start Dates: 2016 - 7/11

2017 - 7/11



### **TOUR COST INCLUDES:**

10 nights Western style and 1 night Japanese style accommodation  
Meet and greet upon arrival at Osaka Kansai Airport  
Airport transfers on arrival and departure  
Private luxury coach transfers between destinations in Japan  
Comprehensive escorted with AJT professional English speaking tour guide  
Gratuities

### ***Meals***

Breakfast everyday  
6 lunches and 4 dinners

### ***Admission fees and activities***

Entry fees to sites, gardens, and museums listed in the itinerary

All prices are per person, based on double or triple occupancy. International flights are not included on our tours -this allows you the flexibility to choose your own departure and get the best value for your money! We can arrange international flights for US customers if needed, please ask for details.

### **All Japan Tours**

646 W. California St., Ontario, CA 91762, USA  
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# ITINERARY

## **Day 01: Osaka Kansai Airport**

Welcome to Osaka! Our tour guide will greet you and escort you to the hotel.

***Overnight: Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class***

***Overnight: Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class (NOTE 1 & 2)***

NOTE 1: If you wish to stay in the center of Osaka for the first night instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport, we can arrange for you to stay at Hotel Elseraine Osaka (or similar class). In this case, airport transfer is not included, but we will provide you directions to get to your hotel in advance.

NOTE 2: If you will be flying into Itami Airport (ITM) instead of Kansai International Airport (KIX), we can arrange for you to stay in the center of Osaka (Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class) instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport. In this case, airport transfer and meet- and-greet are not included, but we will provide with full instructions to get to the hotel in advance.

NOTE 3: The meet and greet is ONLY available for flights arriving in Terminal 1 after 11:00 AM. For guests arriving in Terminal 2, airport pickup is not included, but and we will provide you with directions to get to your hotel in advance.

NOTE 4: If you wish to stay extra nights before the tour starts, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.

## **Day 02: Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kurashiki (Canal Area / Morita Sake Brewery), Hiroshima**

Today we take a 2 hour ride on a luxury coach to Himeji to visit Himeji Castle. It is known as "White Egret Castle" and "White Heron Castle" because of its brilliant white exterior, resembling a bird taking flight. Himeji Castle is the largest and most visited castle in Japan, and is one of the few remaining original castles in Japan. This splendid example of traditional architecture was declared one of the first UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Japan. Next is a visit to Kurashiki. In merchant days, this scenic town thrived as a port for rice shipments. Several old rice granaries and examples of historic architecture still remain, in addition to the stone lined canal. Taste sake as you stroll along the streets of Kurashiki. In the afternoon, we will continue our journey to Hiroshima.

***Overnight: Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast & Lunch***

## **Day 03: Hiroshima (A-Bomb Museum / Peace Park / Okonomiyaki Making / Miyajima Island), Shimanamikaido**

Our first trip of the day is a visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. In the afternoon, we will try making a popular Japanese dish called Okonomiyaki. In the dish you add your favorite ingredients to a mixture of meat and cabbage. The mixture is then cooked on a hot plate, and flipped using a metal spatula. The dish can be made easily at home, and you can show off your new skills to your family. We will then take a short ferry ride to the island of Miyajima, considered sacred by many. At high tide, the famed vermilion torii gate of the Itsukushima Shrine looks like it is floating in the middle of the sea. In the evening, we will drive through the Shimanamikaido to Shikoku Island. The Shimanamikaido is a 60 kilometer long toll road that connects Japan's main island of Honshu to the island of Shikoku, passing over six small islands in the Seto Inland Sea. It is also known as the Nishiseto Expressway.

***Overnight: Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner***

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### **Day 04: Oboke Gorge (Oboke Gorge Boat Ride), Kotohira (Kotohira-gu Shrine), Takamatsu (Ritsurin Park), Kobe (Wagyu Beef Dinner)**

After a Japanese style breakfast, we continue our journey to Oboke Gorge, one of three hidden mountain regions of Japan. Oboke is the valley located upstream of the Yoshino-gawa River. "Boke" means "dangerous to walk along," and Oboke (big boke) was named for its jagged V-shaped rocks and narrow path which, no matter how carefully or slowly you walk, makes walking dangerous. Enjoy a relaxing boat ride and take in the panoramic view of the valley. Then, climb the 1,368 stone steps to the Kotohira-gu Shrine, a Shinto shrine. In Takamatsu we will visit Ritsurin Park, a masterpiece of Japanese landscape 100 years in the making. This sprawling park features beautiful ponds and pavilions, with Mt. Shiun as the perfect backdrop. From there, our private coach takes us across Awaji Island through a series of spectacular bridges. In the evening we continue to Kobe, where we will savor the world famous Wagyu beef.

***Overnight: Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast & Dinner***

### **Day 05: Osaka (Free day)**

A free day to further explore this amazing city. Osaka is Japan's third largest and second most important city. It has been the economic powerhouse of the Kansai region for many centuries. Osaka Aquarium (also known as Kaiyukan), Shinsaibashi (the largest shopping area in Osaka), Umeda (A large, exciting and very crowded underground mall underneath Osaka) and Universal Studios Japan, are within easy reach. Since the old days, Osaka has been called "kuidaore," literally meaning "bringing ruin upon oneself by extravagance in food," and known for its food culture. Dinner is not included tonight so this is a good chance to head out for some culinary adventures.

***Overnight: Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast***

### **Day 06: Osaka (Osaka Castle), Nara (Todai-ji Temple / Nara Deer Park), Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Shrine / Kiyomizu Temple)**

In the morning we will travel to Osaka by private coach. We will visit Osaka Castle, whose construction began in 1583 on the ruins of the Ishiyama Honganji Temple. The castle was the largest of its time and played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century. From Osaka, our coach departs to Nara, the oldest capital city of Japan. We will visit Todaiji Temple, the largest wooden building in Japan. The temple also houses the largest bronze statue of Buddha at 16.3 meters high, and the surrounding park is filled with over 1,000 Sika deer. In the afternoon we will travel to Kyoto, a historical city that was spared from air raids and saved from the atomic bomb during World War II for its cultural and historical value. We will visit to the stunning vermilion colored Fushimi Inari Shrine, whose 4km long tunnel of scarlet torii gates was featured in the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*. This complex wraps around a bamboo wilderness that includes mountains, streams, and ponds, the perfect backdrop for a scenic hike. Then, we will visit the famous Kiyomizu Temple, best known for its wooden stage that juts out from its main hall, 13 meters above the hillside below. The stage affords visitors a nice view of the numerous cherry and maple trees below that erupt in a sea of color in spring and fall, as well as of the city of Kyoto in the distance. We will stay two nights in Kyoto.

***Overnight: Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast & Lunch***

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### **Day 07: Kyoto (Gion Summer Festival)**

This morning, we will visit the Gion Summer Festival by train. The Gion Summer Festival, familiarly known as "Gion-san," is a festival held at Yasaka-jinja Shrine, and the highlight is the splendid pageant of some 30 floats called yamaboko proceeding along the main streets of Kyoto on the 17th. Each float, two-storied and about 6 meters tall, is topped with a long pole shaped like a spear. Adorned with exquisite craftwork such as woven fabric, dyed textiles and sculptures, these floats are so gorgeous that they are sometimes even described as "mobile art museums." During the parade, children wearing make-up and musicians playing the flute, drums and bells are seated on the second level of the floats. Some floats have dolls propped up on the second level. This festival is believed to have started 1,100 years ago when floats were made and paraded in the town to appease the deity of plague and illnesses.

***Overnight: Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast***

### **Day 08: Kyoto (Arashiyama - Tenryuji Temple Zen Garden - Bamboo Grove - Togetsukyo Bridge / Golden Pavilion / Nishijin Kimono Show / Green Tea Ceremony / Gion)**

Today we will continue our tour of Kyoto, once the capital of Japan and still considered its cultural center. First is a visit to Arashiyama to see Tenryuji Temple where you can have a glimpse of traditional Zen landscape garden design. Then proceed through a dense bamboo grove, past several small shrines, tea shops and private houses before arriving at the Togetsukyo Bridge over Hozu River. Continue on to the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) covered with 18 carat gold leaf. This three story structure was originally built by the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1397. At the Nishijin Textile Center, you can view displays of kimonos and even watch a kimono fashion show. Next, we will experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Lastly, we will tour Gion, the old Geisha Quarter, and Pontocho, whose cobblestone alleys vibrate with night life.

***Overnight: Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast & Dinner***

### **Day 09: Iga Ueno (Ninja Museum), Toyota (Toyota Kaikan Museum), Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride**

This morning we will depart to Iga Ueno to visit the ninja museum. Here you can explore a ninja residence with revolving walls, trap doors, and hidden compartments. Visit the exhibition halls displaying ninja tools, gadgets, and weapons and watch a demonstration of ninja skills and real weapons. We then will continue to Toyota Kaikan Museum, which has displays of Toyota's new car models and technologies. Next, take a short Shinkansen bullet train ride to experience the iconic mode of transportation that can reach speeds of up to 300 km/hr. We will stay at the Onsen Hotel at Atami Onsen, where you can soak in the therapeutic waters of a spa bath and feast on a traditional Japanese Kaiseki banquet dinner.

***Overnight: Atami New Akao Hotel or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner***

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## **Day 10: Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Mt Fuji, Tokyo (Shinjuku)**

After enjoying Japanese breakfast at the ryokan, we will travel to Hakone and take a 20 minute ropeway from Togendai to Owakudani. Much of the area here is considered an active volcanic zone since its creation from the eruption of Mount Hakone some 3,000 years ago. There, you can experience hot springs and hot rivers, where sulfurous fumes still linger. Owakudani also has splendid views of Mount Fuji in good weather. From Hakone we will proceed to Mt. Fuji on our private luxury coach. Along the way, enjoy the changing scenery, from thick vegetation to lowlands to rolling clouds. We will stop at Mt. Fuji 5th station (depending on weather) to admire the world famous peak. In the afternoon we will travel to Tokyo. Our last visit for this day is Shinjuku, Japan's largest entertainment district, with department stores, subterranean malls, and electronic shops surrounding the Shinjuku Station.

***Overnight: Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class***

***Meals: Breakfast & Lunch***

## **Day 11: Tokyo (Asakusa Sensoji Temple / Tokyo Edo Museum / Imperial Palace / Tokyo Tower / Odaiba)**

In the morning you will be taken to Asakusa Kannon Temple, an active place of worship where you can see the largest paper lantern in Japan. Here, discover the difference between a Shinto Shrine and a Buddhist Temple, then explore Nakamise Market, which resembles a traditional style shopping street of a bygone era. Next is a visit to Edo Tokyo Museum, where you can learn the history of Tokyo from the time when it was a small village called Edo. The museum also offers many good picture taking opportunities, for example with vehicles and items which were used in the past. Then we will proceed to the Imperial Palace, the former site of Edo Castle. You can explore the park, surrounded by moats and stone fortifications, in the heart of the city. In the afternoon, we will visit the the world's tallest self supporting steel tower. At 333 meters high, Tokyo Tower is 13 meters taller than its model, the Eiffel Tower. We will go up 150 meters to the main observatory deck and get a bird's eye view of Tokyo. From there we will cross the Rainbow Bridge, and be treated to stunning views of Tokyo Bay. We will travel to the man made islands of Odaiba and see cutting edge architecture, as well as the night view of Tokyo Tower and Rainbow Bridge.

***Overnight: Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class***

***Overnight: Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class (NOTE 5 & 6)***

NOTE 5: If you wish to stay in the center of Tokyo for the last night instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu, we can arrange for you to stay at Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo (or similar class). In this case, airport transfer is not included, but we will provide full instructions for you to get to the airport in advance.

NOTE 6: If you will be flying out from Haneda Airport (HND) instead of Narita Airport (NRT), we can arrange for you to stay at Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo (or similar class) instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu. In this case, airport transfer is not included but we will provide full instructions for you to get to the airport in advance.

***Meals: Breakfast & Lunch***

## **Day 12: Tour End**

After breakfast, our tour officially ends. Checkout time is 11 am and Narita Airport can be reached by hotel shuttle bus.

NOTE 7: If you would like to stay longer in Japan, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.

***Meals: Breakfast***

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