

Japan Vacation Specialists

AJT
All Japan Tours

Best of Japan Tour Summer: Tokushima Awa Odori Dance Festival

11 days 10 nights

US\$3798.00

**Tour Start Dates: 2016 – 8/8
2017 – 8/8**



TOUR COST INCLUDES:

9 nights Western style and 1 night Japanese style accommodation
Meet and greet upon arrival at Narita 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
7 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: Narita Airport

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

Overnight: Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

Overnight: Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class (NOTE 1 & 2)

NOTE 1: If you wish to stay in the center of Tokyo for the first 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 you directions to get to your hotel in advance.

NOTE 2: If you will be flying into Haneda Airport (HND) instead of Narita International Airport (NRT), we can arrange for you to stay in the center of Tokyo (Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class) instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu. 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 & 2 after 11:00 AM. For guests arriving in Terminal 3, 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: 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: Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 03: Mt Fuji, Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride

We will depart from Tokyo to Mt. Fuji on our private luxury coach. Along the way, enjoy the changing scenery, from thick vegetation to lowlands to rolling clouds. Stop at Mt. Fuji 5th station (depending on weather) to admire the world famous peak. We will take a tour of Hakone by taking a 20 minute ropeway from Togendai to Owakudani. Most of the area around Owakudani is considered an active volcanic zone since its creation from the eruption of Mount Hakone some 3,000 years ago. Now, you can experience hot springs and hot rivers there, where sulfurous fumes still linger. Owakudani also has splendid views of Mount Fuji in good weather. Next, take a Shinkansen bullet train ride for experience, which can reach speeds of up to 300 km/hr. We will stay at the Onsen Ryokan at Kanzaiji Onsen, where you can soak in the therapeutic waters of a spa bath and feast on a traditional Japanese Kaiseki banquet dinner.

Overnight: Hotel Kikusuitei or similar class

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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Day 04: Toyota (Toyota Kaikan Museum), Iga Ueno (Ninja Museum), Kyoto (Kiyomizu Temple)

After breakfast our first stop is the Toyota Kaikan Museum, which has displays of Toyota's new car models and technologies. From Toyota, our coach departs 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 will then continue 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. 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

Day 05: Kyoto (Arashiyama - Tenryu-ji 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 06: Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Shrine), Nara (Todaiji Temple / Deer Park), Osaka (Osaka Castle / Dotonbori - Shinsaibashi)

The day begins with a visit in the scenic and historic Fushimi district. We will visit 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. From there we continue 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 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. Our last visit for the day is Dodonbori, which runs parallel to the Dotonbori canal. A popular shopping, entertainment, and food district, Dodonbori is known for the hundreds of neon and mechanized signs that line the street, including the famous Glico Running Man and Kani Doraku Crab signs.

Overnight: Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

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Day 07: Kobe (Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum), Tokushima (Onaruto Bridge - Naruto Whirlpools / Awa Odori Hall / Awa Odori Folk Dance Festival)

The day begins at a visit to the Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum, you will learn the fascinating history of sake brewing with its nostalgic buildings, tasting experience, and valuable collection of traditional brewing tools. Then together we'll cross the Awaji Island via a chain of spectacular bridges spanning the fabled Japan Inland Sea. The three major bridges that now join Honshu Island to Shikoku Island have caused the demise of virtually all the romantic ferry trips, that once attracted many holiday makers to leisurely cruise this vast waterway. We will then stop in at the Naruto Bridge Interpretive Centre to learn about the largest natural whirlpool in Japan and the engineering that went into the construction of these gigantic bridges. Visit the Awaodori Hall, a well done museum about the Awa Odori. Tonight, we will enjoy the Awa Odori Folk Dance Festival, the most famous of many dance festivals held across Japan. Awa is the former name for Tokushima Prefecture while Odori means dance. "Eraiatcha, eraiatcha, yoi yoi yoi yoi. Odoru aho ni miru aho. Onaji aho nara odoranya son, son!" (Eraiatcha, eraiatcha, yoi yoi yoi yoi. Dancing fools and watching fools. Both are the same fools, so why not dance?!) This is a traditional phrase chanted in Japan and it is what Awa Odori is all about. The dancers form teams called "Ren" for Awa Odori, originated in Tokushima Prefecture, and the teams compete for the dance performance with each other. Anyone can go crazy dancing to the rhythm of two beats accompanied by the samisen, the drums, the bells and the flutes. There are two dancing styles for Awa Odori: Otoko-odori (male dancing) which is dynamic and funny and Onna-odori (female dancing) which is sultry and elegant. You will bubble with the delight which comes from the bottom of your heart.

Overnight: Hotel Clement Tokushima or similar class

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 08: Takamatsu (Shikoku Mura Village / Ritsurin Park), Oboke Gorge (Oboke Gorge Boat Ride)

This morning we will proceed to Takamatsu with a visit to the Shikoku Mura Village. Shikoku Mura (Shikoku Village) is an open air museum situated at the base of Yashima. This pleasant hillside park preserves and exhibits traditional buildings and structures that have been relocated here from all over Shikoku Island. Then 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. 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.

Overnight: Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 09: Shimanamikaido (Scenic Driving / Kirosoan Observatory), Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park - A-Bomb Museum / Miyajima - Itsukushima Shrine)

In the morning, we will drive through the Shimanamikaido to Honshu Island. The Shimanamikaido is a 60 kilometer long toll road that connects Japan's main island of Shikoku to the island of Honshu, passing over six small islands in the Seto Inland Sea. It is also known as the Nishiseto Expressway. We will stop by Kirosoan Observatory where you can take in views of the Kurushima Kaikyo Bridges standing among hundreds of islands beautifully scattered over the Seto Inland

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Sea. The modern observation deck was cleverly designed and built halfway into the ground of the hillside so as not to spoil the natural surroundings. In Hiroshima, we will visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. 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's floating in the middle of the sea. The shrine complex is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Miyajima has been selected as one of Japan's three most scenic places (nihon sankei).

Overnight: Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 10: Kurashiki (Canal Area), Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kobe (Wagyu Beef Dinner)

Today we will visit 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. Then we will proceed 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. In the evening we continue to Kobe, where we will savor the world famous Wagyu beef.

Overnight: Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

Overnight: Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class (NOTE 5 & 6)

NOTE 5: If you wish to stay in the center of Osaka for the last night instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport, we can arrange for you to stay at Hotel Elserine Osaka (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 Itami Airport (ITM) instead of Kansai International Airport (KIX), we can arrange for you to stay at Hotel Elserine Osaka (or similar class) instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport. 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 & Dinner

Day 11: Tour End

After breakfast, our tour officially ends. Checkout time is 11 am and Osaka Kansai Airport can be reached in a three minute walk.

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

Meals: Breakfast



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