

The Golden Triangle of Japan (Reverse): Great Wisteria at Ashikaga Flower Park 2018 - 4/22

The must see sights of Tokyo, Takayama & Kyoto...plus the Great Wisteria at Ashikaga Flower Park

Tour Code: GTD1956982

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3098

Single supplement: USD \$640

Tour duration: 9 days 8 nights

Destination:

Nara / Uji / Kyoto / Kanazawa / Shirakawa-go / Takayama / Matsumoto / Mt Fuji / Hakone / Tokyo / Ashikaga / Omiya

Tour cost includes:

- 6 nights Western style and 2 nights Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Osaka Kansai Airport
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Private 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

- All entry fees to sites, activities listed in the itinerary

Dates & Price

2017

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Sun. Apr 23, 2017	Mon. May 1, 2017	USD \$3098.00	Osaka	Tokyo	Deluxe	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Sun. Apr 22, 2018	Mon. Apr 30, 2018	USD \$3098.00	Osaka	Tokyo	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTD1956982

Day 1 Osaka Kansai Airport

Welcome to Osaka! An AJT representative will meet you at the arrival gate and direct you to the hotel.

Hotel:

Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

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 2 Nara (Todaiji Temple / Deer Park), Uji (Green Tea Ceremony), Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Shrine / Kiyomizu Temple)

In the morning we will travel to Nara, the oldest capital city of Japan, by private coach. 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. We will continue our tour to Uji where you can experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

Day 3 Kyoto (Arashiyama - Tenryuji Temple Zen Garden - Sagano Bamboo Forest - Togetsukyo Bridge / Golden Pavilion / Nishijin Kimono Show / Miyako Odori - Cherry Blossom Dancing Performance Show / 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 forest, past several small shrines, tea shops and private houses before arriving at the Togetsukyo Bridge over Hozu River. Next, visit 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 and was rebuilt and restored over the years. Its history inspired the fictional book The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, by Yukio Mishima. Then proceed to the Nishijin Textile Center where you can view displays of kimonos and even watch a kimono fashion show. We have a special treat this afternoon - Miyako Odori (Cherry Blossom Dancing Performance Show). This dance is performed by the geiko (geisha) and maiko (apprentice geisha). The first performance in 1872 was promoted as part of the Exhibition for the Promotion of Domestic Industry, as a measure to promote prosperity in Kyoto after the city's decline as a result of the capital having been moved to Tokyo in 1869. Infusion of new ideas into this annual event has made it very popular. It is now one of the main events in Kyoto. Lastly, we will tour Gion, the old Geisha Quarter, and Pontocho, whose cobblestone alleys vibrate with night life.

NOTE: For tour that starts on April 23rd, 2017, we will visit the Gion Corner - maiko dances and traditional performing arts show instead of the Miyako Odori.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

Day 4 Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride from Kyoto to Maibara, Kanazawa (Kenrokuen Garden), Shirakawa-go (Shiroyama Viewpoint - Gassho-zukuri Minkaen)

After breakfast, experience a Shinkansen bullet train ride from Kyoto to Maibara, which can reach speeds of up to 300 km/hr. Then transfer to Kanazawa to visit Kenrokuen Garden, one of three most beautiful strolling gardens of Japan. The name Kenrokuen literally means a garden combining the 6 attributes of a perfect landscape: spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, water features, and panoramas. Here, you'll find the oldest fountain in Japan and Kotoji-toro, the two-legged stone lantern that is the icon of Kenrokuen and Kanazawa. From Kanazawa we cross the mountains by private coach to the World Heritage listed rural area of Shirakawa-go. Shirakawa-go is home of the UNESCO designated Gassho-styled ("praying hands") farmhouses. First is the Shiroyama Viewpoint, where great views of Ogimachi Village can be seen. Next is the Gassho-zukuri Minkaen open air museum where farmhouses and other structures were relocated to the area. Then, we will continue on to Takayama, a city located amongst the Japanese Alps and is known as "Little Kyoto" for its preserved historical structures and environment. Due to its remote position in the mountains, it was cut off from the rest of Japan for most of its history and thus has maintained a very unique and traditional atmosphere. Tonight, we will stay at the Ryokan, where you can soak in the therapeutic waters of a spa bath and feast on a traditional Japanese Kaiseki banquet dinner.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Okada Ryokan or similar class

Day 5 Takayama (Morning Market / Takayama Jinya / Old Town), Matsumoto (Matsumoto Castle)

After enjoying a Japanese breakfast at the ryokan, we will continue sightseeing in Takayama, including the Morning Market, Takayama Jinya and Old Town. You can browse the market stalls for local crafts and fresh farm products. Takayama's Old Town has been beautifully preserved, with many buildings and whole streets of houses dating from the Edo Period (1600-1868). On some streets, like Sannomachi Street, you can find many old homes, shops, coffee houses and sake breweries, some of which have been in business for centuries. In the afternoon, we will continue on to Matsumoto. Visit Matsumoto Castle, also known as "Crow Castle" because of its black exterior. Inside, we can see the best examples of wooden construction of a traditional Japanese style castle. This is a classical "flatland" castle surrounded by a still intact defense moat.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Yatsugatake Royal Hotel or similar class

Day 6 Mt Fuji, Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Tokyo (Shibuya - Shibuya Crossing - Hachiko Statue)

After breakfast, we will travel to Mt. Fuji on our private 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. From Mt. Fuji we will proceed 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 view hot springs and hot rivers, where sulfurous fumes still linger. Owakudani also has splendid views of Mt. Fuji in good weather. In the afternoon we will travel to Tokyo. Our last visit for this day is Shibuya. We will be able to see the famed Shibuya Crossing in action and cross the street with the crowd. We will then take photos with the Hachiko Statue at the crossing, which is a monument dedicated to a loyal dog that waited even after his master passed away.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

Day 7 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 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

Day 8 Tochigi (Ashikaga Flower Park), Omiya (Omiya Bonsai Museum)

Today we will first visit the Ashikaga Flower Park in the Tochigi Prefecture. There, you will find the Great Wisteria Tree of more than 150 years of age, which is designated as a Natural Monument in Tochigi. Not only will you be shaded by the Great Wisteria Tree, but as you venture through the park the different colored wisteria will decorate your walk from above. Below the various flowers, like azaleas, will complement the hanging wisteria throughout the Ashikaga Flower Park. Next, we will head to the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum where you will learn about bonsai. There over 100 bonsai masterpieces at the museum. Then after we will have the chance to go around the Omiya Bonsai Village where we will enter the 5 nurseries kept by 5 different artisans.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

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.

Itinerary

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Day 9 Tour End

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

Meals:
Breakfast

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