

Best of Japan with Japanese Alps: Cherry Blossom Tour 2018 - 3/25, 4/1

Perfect for those who want to visit the well known regions of Japan...plus cherry blossom in spring

Tour Code: GTE1621727

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3898

Single supplement: USD \$800

Tour duration: 11 days 10 nights

Destination:

Tokyo / Hakone / Mt Fuji / Matsumoto / Takayama / Shirakawa-go / Kanazawa / Kyoto / Uji / Nara / Osaka / Himeji / Kurashiki / Hiroshima / Shimanami Kaido / Obokekyo Gorge / Kotohira / Takamatsu / Kobe

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 coach transfers between destinations in Japan
- Comprehensive escorted with AJT professional English speaking tour guide
- Gratuities

Meals

- Breakfast everyday
- 7 lunches and 5 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 2, 2017	Wed. Apr 12, 2017	USD \$3898.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour
Sun. Apr 9, 2017	Wed. Apr 19, 2017	USD \$3898.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Sun. Mar 25, 2018	Wed. Apr 4, 2018	USD \$3898.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour
Sun. Apr 1, 2018	Wed. Apr 11, 2018	USD \$3898.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTE1621727

Day 1 Narita Airport

Welcome to Tokyo! An AJT representative will meet you at the arrival gate and direct you to the hotel by hotel shuttle bus.

Hotel:

Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

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 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 Tokyo (Asakusa Sensoji Temple / Ueno Park / Imperial Palace / Meiji Shrine / 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. Continue to Ueno Park, famous for its more than 1,000 cherry trees. 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. Next is a visit to Meiji Shrine. Meiji Shrine is a shrine dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and his consort, Empress Shoken. The shrine was completed and dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and the Empress Shoken in 1920, eight years after the passing of the emperor and six years after the passing of the empress. The shrine was destroyed during the Second World War but was rebuilt shortly thereafter. 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 3 Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Gotemba (Gotemba Peace Park), Mt Fuji

We will depart from Tokyo to Hakone on our private luxury coach. We will take a tour of Hakone by taking a 20 minute ropeway from Togendai to Owakundani. Most of the area around Owakundani 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. Owakundani also has splendid views of Mount Fuji in good weather. Next, we head to Gotemba Peace Park and take in the scenic view of Mt. Fuji and thousands of cherry blossoms. From Gotemba we will proceed to Mt. Fuji. 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 stay at the Onsen Ryokan at Yatsugatake, 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:

Yatsugateke Royal Hotel or similar class

Day 4 Matsumoto (Matsumoto Castle), Takayama (Old Town / Takayama Jinya)

Today we will head to Matsumoto where we'll visit the photogenic Matsumoto Castle, or Black Crow Castle, dating back over 400 years. Then, we will continue on to Takayama. This city is 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. We'll explore the old town of Takayama. Along the way you'll notice the huge cedar balls hanging from the eaves of several shops - these indicate that the shops are sake. Next, visit Takayama Jinya, the only traditional local government office in existence and a fine example of a miniature palace containing offices, an interrogation room with torture devices and a 440- year old rice granary.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Hotel Associa Takayama Resort or similar class

Day 5 Takayama (Morning Market), Shirakawa-go (Shiroyama Viewpoint - Gassho-zukuri Minkaen), Kanazawa (Kenrokuen), Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride from Maibara to Kyoto

This morning we'll enjoy the lively city market before heading 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. From Shirakawa-go, we will depart 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 iconic of Kenrokuen and Kanazawa. Next, experience a Shinkansen bullet train ride from Maibara to Kyoto, which can reach speeds of up to 300 km/hr. We will stay two nights in Kyoto, a historical city. During World War II it was spared from air raids and saved from the atomic bomb for its cultural and historical value.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTE1621727

Day 6 Kyoto (Heian Shrine / Heian Shrine Garden / Nishijin Kimono Show / Golden Pavilion / 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 the spectacular Heian Shrine, where we see an extensive stroll garden of the Meiji period with a grove of weeping cherry trees. Of special note are the stepping stones in the pond, which were actually the pillars of a 16th century stone bridge that once spanned the Kamo River. Here you also find the largest Torii Gate in Japan spanning the road leading to the shrine. At the Nishijin Textile Center, you can view displays of kimonos and even watch a kimono fashion show. 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. 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 March 26th, 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 7 Kyoto (Kiyomizu Temple), Uji (Green Tea Ceremony), Nara (Todaiji Temple / Deer Park), Osaka (Dotonbori - Shinsaibashi)

In the morning 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 the spring and fall, as well as of the city of Kyoto in the distance. Then, we proceed to Uji where we will experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. From Uji, our coach departs to Nara, the oldest capital city of Japan. We will visit Todaiji Temple, the largest wooden building in Japan. This 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. Our last visit for this trip 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class

Day 8 Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kurashiki (Canal Area), Hiroshima

Today we take a 2 hour ride on a private 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class

Day 9 Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park - A-Bomb Museum / Okonomiyaki Making / Miyajima Island - Itsukushima Shrine), Shimanamikaido (Scenic Driving)

Today we will visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. Next, we will try making a popular Japanese dish called Okonomiyaki. This dish is a mixture of batter, cabbage, and any of your favorite ingredients. The mixture is then cooked on a hot plate and flipped using a metal spatula. The dish can be made easily at home, so you can show off your new skills to your family. After lunch, we will take a short ferry ride to the island of Miyajima; the cherry blossoms on the island are spectacular to behold. 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). In the afternoon, 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

Day 10 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

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.

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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.

Meals:
Breakfast

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