

## Japan In Depth (Reverse): Cherry Blossom Tour 2018 - 3/26, 4/2

*Exploring Japan's three main islands: Kyushu, Shikoku, & Honshu in the cherry blossom season.*

Tour Code: GTG1582772

### Tour Information

**Land cost: from USD \$4698**

**Single supplement: USD \$960**

**Tour duration: 13 days 12 nights**

**Destination:**

*Saga / Nagasaki / Takachiho / Beppu / Kitsuki / Hiroshima / Shimanami Kaido / Takamatsu / Kurashiki / Himeji / Kobe / Nara / Uji / Kyoto / Koka / Hikone / Hakone / Mt Fuji / Tokyo*

**Tour cost includes:**

- 10 nights Western style and 2 nights Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Fukuoka 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
- 8 lunches and 6 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
Sat. Apr 1, 2017	Thu. Apr 13, 2017	USD \$4698.00	Fukuoka	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>
Tue. Apr 4, 2017	Sun. Apr 16, 2017	USD \$4698.00	Fukuoka	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>

#### 2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Mon. Mar 26, 2018	Sat. Apr 7, 2018	USD \$4698.00	Fukuoka	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>
Mon. Apr 2, 2018	Sat. Apr 14, 2018	USD \$4698.00	Fukuoka	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>

# Itinerary

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Tour Code: GTG1582772

## Day 1 Fukuoka Airport

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

### **Hotel:**

Hotel Nikko Fukuoka or similar class

NOTE 1: The meet and greet is ONLY available for flights arriving after 11:00 AM

NOTE 2: If you wish to stay extra nights before the tour starts, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.

## **Day 2 Saga (Mifuneyama Rakuen), Nagasaki (Glover Garden / Gunkanjima Island)**

The day begins with a visit to Saga, where we will visit the Mifuneyama Rakuen. In spring, the park is reminiscent of a Shan shui painting that portrays 5000 cherry blossom trees and 50,000 azaleas all blooming against a backdrop of the rugged cliff of Mt. Mifune. From there, we proceed to Nagasaki to visit the Glover Gardens, an open air museum, also a place where we can see a fine collection of historic mansions of former Western residents of Nagasaki. Then, visit the Gunkanjima Island, a small island located about 20 kilometers from Nagasaki Port. Until 1974, the island served as a coal mine, and a resident to more than 5000 people who called the 480 meter long, 150 meter wide island home, resulting in the highest population density in history recorded worldwide. To accommodate so many people in such a small area, every piece of land was built up so that the island came to resemble a massive battleship. In fact, "Gunkanjima" means "battleship island" in Japanese. The island was formally approved as UNESCO World Heritage site in July 2015.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Nagasaki Gloverhill or similar class

## **Day 3 Ferry from Shimabara to Kumamoto, Takachiho (Takachiho Gorge / Amano Iwato Shrine & Amano Yasukawara / Yokagura Performance)**

Today we will take a 30 minute ferry from Shimabara and cross the Ariake Sea to Kumamoto. From Kumamoto, we drive east to Takachiho, a town in northern Miyazaki Prefecture that is steeped in Japanese mythology. It is the supposed site of legend where Amaterasu, the Shinto Sun Goddess, disturbed by her brother's cruel pranks, hid herself in a cave, prompting the other gods and goddesses to try and lure her out. Another legend suggests that this is where Amaterasu's grandson Ninigi-no-Mikoto descended to earth to establish Japan's imperial family. Takachiho is also known as a "power spot", a place of profound religious importance and natural beauty, which radiates spiritual energy. We will visit Takachiho Gorge, a narrow chasm cut through the rock by the Gokase River. The nearly sheer cliffs lining the gorge are made of slow forming volcanic basalt columns, which resemble the scales of a dragon where the stone twisted and flowed as it was formed. Partway along the gorge is the 17 meter high Minainotaki waterfall cascading down to the river below, and it is truly impressive to see the waterfall against a backdrop of dense green foliage and the surrounding grey cliffs. Then visit Amano Iwato Shrine and Amano Yasukawara. Amano Iwato Shrine was built near the cave where Amaterasu is said to have hid herself. A short walk down the road from Amano Iwato Shrine is a path that leads down to the river below. Eventually the path leads to a simple shrine inside a cave known as Amano Yasukawara. This is said to be the cave where the gods and goddesses met to discuss their strategy of luring Amaterasu out of hiding. The natural beauty of the cave and river lined by countless stacks of stones make Amano Yasukawara a place not to miss. After dinner, we have a special treat-a Yokagura Dance Performance. An outrageously ribald dance that supposedly caused Amaterasu to leave the cave to see what all the fun was about, and in doing so she returned her light to the world.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Hotel Takachiho or similar class

**Day 4 Beppu (Beppu Hells / Mt. Takasaki Monkey Park), Kitsuki (Kitsuki Samurai Districts - Ohara Residence), From Kitsuki, take the "Sonic" express train to Kokura, then board the Shinkansen bullet train to Hiroshima**

After your Japanese breakfast at the hotel, we proceed to a bather's paradise - the celebrated hot spring resort of Beppu. Marvel at one of Beppu's most celebrated attractions, the Jigoku Meguri, or "Boiling Hells" hot springs. View two of the nine hot springs or "hells" of Beppu. These hot springs are ideal for viewing rather than bathing. The springs earned their name because it was said that these mysterious, steamy attractions resembled a scene from hell ("jigoku" means "hell"). Then we will enjoy a scenic drive to Mt. Takasaki Monkey Park where we will take a monorail up to the observation area. Mt. Takasaki is a forested mountain just outside of Beppu and home to over 1,500 wild Japanese monkeys. Within this natural habitat, the monkeys have been fed regularly in order to keep them living on the mountain and prevent conflicts with local fruit farmers. The monkeys are quite accustomed to human visitors, and it is possible to get very close in order to take their pictures! From here, visit the Kitsuki Samurai Districts en route to Kokura before taking a ride on the top speed Shinkansen bullet train to Hiroshima.

**Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

**Hotel:**

Sheraton Hiroshima Hotel or similar class

## **Day 5 Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park - A-Bomb Museum / Miyajima - Itsukushima Shrine), Shimanami Kaido (Scenic Driving / Kiroosan Observatory)**

Today we will visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. 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 Shimanami Kaido to Shikoku Island. The Shimanami Kaido 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. We will stop by Kiroosan Observatory where you can take in views of the Kurushima Kaikyo Bridges standing among hundreds of islands beautifully scattered over the Seto Inland 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.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

## **Day 6 Takamatsu (Shikoku Mura Village / Ritsurin Park), Seto Ohashi Bridge**

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. In the evening, we will drive through the Seto- ohashi Bridge back to Honshu Island. Seto-ohashi Bridge is a collective term for the six bridges that connects Japan's main island of Shikoku to the island of Honshu, passing over five small islands in the Seto Inland Sea. These beautiful bridges took 40 years and a tremendous amount of money to build. They are the essence of all available bridge-building technologies. Tonight, we will stay in a spa hotel in Kurashiki Yuga Onsen, 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:**

Kurashiki Yuga Onsen Hotel Santoka or similar class

## **Day 7 Kurashiki (Canal Area / Ohara Museum of Art), Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kobe (Wagyu beef)**

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. We will also visit the Ohara Museum of Art, which is considered the first museum of Western art in Japan. It is a private museum consisting of three adjacent buildings next to the 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. There are about 1,000 cherry trees spread out across the castle grounds. Enjoy the combination of the castle's stone walls and imposing buildings with the blooming flowers. In the evening we continue to Kobe, where we will savor the world famous Wagyu beef.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class

## **Day 8 Nara (Todai-ji Temple / Nara Deer Park), Uji (Green Tea Ceremony), Kyoto (Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum / Fushimi Inari Shrine)**

In the morning you 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. Then, visit a sake museum in the scenic and historic Fushimi district, which is home to more than twenty breweries and is considered one of the brewing capitals in Japan. At the Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum, you will be introduced to the fascinating history of sake brewing with its nostalgic buildings, tasting experience, and valuable collection of traditional brewing tools. Then a 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. We will stay two nights in Kyoto.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

## **Day 9 Kyoto (Golden Pavilion / Ryoan-ji Rock Garden / Nishijin Kimono Show / Kiyomizu Temple / Maruyama Park / Gion Geisha District)**

Today we will continue our tour of Kyoto, once the capital of Japan and still considered its cultural center. We will begin with the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), a temple covered with 18 carat gold leaves. This three-story structure was originally built by the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1397. Next is the Ryoan-ji Rock Garden, famed for its exceptional rock and sand garden (seki-taki). At the Nishijin Textile Center, you can view displays of kimonos and even watch a kimono fashion show. 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 during the spring and the fall seasons, as well as a beautiful scene of Kyoto City in the distance. From Kiyomizu Temple we will head to Maruyama Park, which is one of the most popular places for cherry blossom viewing (hanami) in Kyoto. Lastly, we will tour Gion, the old Geisha Quarter, and Pontocho, whose cobblestone alleys vibrate with night life.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

## **Day 10 Koka (Miho Museum / Koka Ninja Mansion), Hikone (Hikone Castle), Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride**

This morning we will visit the famous Miho Museum. The Miho Museum has stunning architecture that accentuates the surrounding nature while exhibiting a variety of items from different ancient civilizations. There is a tunnel that leads from the museum to a road lined with hundreds of cherry blossom trees. It was designed by the renowned architect, I. M. Pei, and is named after Koyama Mihoko, one of the richest women in Japan and the founder of the museum. From there, visit Koka Ninja Mansion. This mansion used to be resided in by ninja, equipped with many ingenious traps and devices, designed to prevent intruders and to provide a means of escape in times of need. We will then continue to Hikone to visit Hikone Castle, an attractive hanami spot during the cherry blossom season. Hikone Castle is an original castle, i.e. it survived the post feudal era without undergoing destruction and reconstruction, considered one of the four most beautiful castles in Japan with its three-layered chalk tower. Hikone Castle has a backdrop of Lake Biwa and Konki-zan Hill, and is regarded as one of four national heritage castles, along with Inuyama Castle in Aichi, Himeji Castle in Hyogo, and Matsumoto Castle in Nagano. Next, our group will experience a Shinkansen bullet train ride, which can reach speeds of up to 300 km/hr. We will stay at the Onsen Hotel at Hamanako Kanzaiji Onsen, 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:**

Hamanako Royal Hotel or similar class

## **Day 11 Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Mt Fuji, Tokyo (Shibuya - Shibuya Crossing - Hachiko Statue)**

After enjoying Japanese breakfast at the hotel, we will travel to Hakone and take a 20 minute ropeway from Togendai to Owakundani. 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. Owakundani also has splendid views of Mount Fuji in good weather. From Hakone we will proceed to Mt. Fuji on our private coach. Along the way, enjoy the changing scenery, from thick vegetation to lowlands and 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 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 12 Tokyo (Asakusa Sensoji Temple / Ueno Park / 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. Continue to Ueno Park, famous for its more than 1,000 cherry trees. 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 vehicles and items which were used in the past are placed on display for museum goers. 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 the Rainbow Bridge.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class (NOTE 3 & 4)

NOTE 3: 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 4: 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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Tour Code: GTG1582772

## Day 13 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 5: If you would like to stay longer in Japan, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.