

Best of Japan Tour Summer: Tokushima Awa Odori Dance Festival 2017-2018

Perfect for those who want to visit the well known regions of Japan.

Tour Code: GTM1729061

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3798

Single supplement: USD \$800

Tour duration: 11 days 10 nights

Destination:

Tokyo / Mt Fuji / Hakone / Koka / Kyoto / Nara / Osaka / Tokushima / Takamatsu / Oboke Gorge / Shimanami Kaido / Hiroshima / Kurashiki / Himeji / 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 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. Aug 6, 2017	Wed. Aug 16, 2017	USD \$3798.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Thu. Aug 9, 2018	Sun. Aug 19, 2018	USD \$3798.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTM1729061

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 / 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. 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 Mt Fuji, Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Bullet Train Ride

We will depart from Tokyo to Mt. Fuji on our private 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. Next, we will travel to Hakone, which is among Japan's most popular hot-spring resorts, and view the forested slopes of Hakone National Park. We will take a 20 minute ropeway ride 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, take a Shinkansen bullet train ride for experience, 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 4 Koka (Koka Ninja Mansion / Miho Museum), Kyoto (Kiyomizu Temple)

After breakfast at the hotel, our group will visit the 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. Then proceed to Miho Museum, a stunning architecture that accentuates the surrounding nature while exhibiting a variety of items from different ancient civilizations. 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. Moreover, the museum has been listed as one of the "1000 Places To See Before You Die". 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. 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 5 Kyoto (Arashiyama - Tenryuji Temple Zen Garden - Sagano Bamboo Forest - 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 forest, 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

Day 6 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class

Day 7 Kobe (Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum), Tokushima (Onaruto Bridge - Naruto Whirlpools / Awa Odori Kaikan 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hotel Clement Tokushima or similar class

Day 8 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

Day 9 Shimanami Kaido (Scenic Driving / Kirozan Observatory), Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park - A-Bomb Museum / Miyajima - Itsukushima Shrine)

In the morning, we will drive through the Shimanami Kaido to Honshu Island. The Shimanami Kaido 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 Kirozan 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. 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).

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class

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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.

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 Ends

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.