

Best of Japan: Cherry Blossom Tour 2018 - 3/26, 4/2, 4/8

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

Tour Code: GTN0759717

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3598

Single supplement: USD \$720

Tour duration: 10 days 9 nights

Destination:

*Tokyo / Mt Fuji / Hakone / Hikone / Koka / Kyoto / Uji /
 Nara / Osaka / Himeji / Kurashiki / Hiroshima /
 Shimanami Kaido / Obokekyo Gorge / Kotohira /
 Takamatsu / Kobe*

Tour cost includes:

- 8 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
- 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
Mon. Apr 3, 2017	Wed. Apr 12, 2017	USD \$3598.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour
Mon. Apr 10, 2017	Wed. Apr 19, 2017	USD \$3598.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Mon. Mar 26, 2018	Wed. Apr 4, 2018	USD \$3598.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour
Mon. Apr 2, 2018	Wed. Apr 11, 2018	USD \$3598.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour
Sun. Apr 8, 2018	Tue. Apr 17, 2018	USD \$3598.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

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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 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 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 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 the Rainbow Bridge.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

Day 3 Mt Fuji, Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Shinkansen 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 Hikone (Hikone Castle), Koka (Koka Ninja Mansion / Miho Museum)

After breakfast at the hotel, our group will visit the 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. 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. Then proceed to Miho Museum, a 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. Moreover, the museum has been listed as one of the "1000 Places To See Before You Die". Afterwards, we will proceed to Kyoto for two nights.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

Day 5 Kyoto (Golden Pavilion / Ryoan-ji Rock Garden / Nishijin Kimono Show / Kiyomizu Temple / Maruyama Park / Gion Geisha District)

Today we will start our tour of Kyoto, once the capital of Japan and still considered its cultural center. First is a visit to the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) 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 an elegant kimono fashion show. Then, we will visit the famous Kiyomizu Temple, which is 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 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 Quarters, 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 / Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum), Uji (Green Tea Ceremony), Nara (Todaiji Temple / Deer Park), Osaka (Dotonbori - Shinsaibashi)

The day begins with a visit in the scenic and historic Fushimi district, which is also one of the brewing capitals of Japan. We continue 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. At the Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum, you will learn the fascinating history of sake brewing with its nostalgic buildings, tasting experience, and valuable collection of traditional brewing tools. We will continue our tour to Uji where you can experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. 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. Our last visit for the day is Dotonbori, which runs parallel to the Dotonbori canal. A popular shopping, entertainment, and food district, Dotonbori 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 Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kurashiki (Canal Area), Hiroshima

Today we take a 2 hour ride on a luxury 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 8 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 9 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.

Itinerary

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Day 10 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.