

Charms of Southern Japan Tour Autumn (Reverse) with Koyasan

Discover the culture, national parks, countrysides, gardens and "must see" sights of Southern Japan

Tour Code: GTN1419652

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3098

Single supplement: USD \$640

Tour duration: 9 days 8 nights

Destination:

Nagasaki / Kumamoto / Takachiho / Beppu / Usa / Hiroshima / Shimanamo Kaido / Takamatsu / Tokushima / Mt Koya

Tour cost includes:

- 1 night temple lodging, 6 nights Western style and 1 night 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
- 6 lunches and 3 dinners

Admission fees and activities

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

2017

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Mon. Oct 16, 2017	Tue. Oct 24, 2017	USD \$3098.00	Fukuoka	Osaka	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

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Day 1 Fukuoka Airport

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

Meals:

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 Nagasaki (Dejima / Glover Garden / Gunkanjima Island)

The day begins with a visit to Nagasaki. Visit Dejima, an island with a 400-year history of Dutch trade. Next, visit to 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 / Dinner

Hotel:

Unzen Onsen Miyazaki Ryokan or similar class

Day 3 Ferry from Shimabara to Kumamoto, Kumamoto (Kumamoto Castle), 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. In Kumamoto, we will visit the Kumamoto Castle, considered one of the three premier castles in Japan. 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), Usa (Usa Jingu Shrine), Shinkansen Bullet Train from Kokura 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 Usa Jingu Shrine en route to Kokura before taking a ride on the top speed Shinkansen bullet train to Hiroshima.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class

Day 5 Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park - A-Bomb Museum / Okonomiyaki Making / Miyajima Island - Itsukushima Shrine)

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, 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

Day 6 Shimanami Kaido (Scenic Driving / Kosanji Temple / Kiroasan Observatory), Takamatsu (Shikoku Mura Village)

Today 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. Stop by Kosanji Temple and Kiroasan Observatory, views of the Kurushima Kaikyo Bridges standing among hundreds of islands beautifully scattered over the Seto Inland Sea. The modern observation deck is cleverly designed and built halfway into the ground of the hillside so as not to spoil the natural surroundings. Then, we continue our journey 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

JR Hotel Clement Takamatsu or similar class

Day 7 Takamatsu (Riturin Park), Tokushima (Awaodori Kaikan - Awa Odori Folk Dance Performance), Ferry from Tokushima to Wakayama, Mt Koya (Temple Lodging - Shukubo)

This morning 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. Then, we proceed to Tokushima where we will experience a Awa Odori Folk Dance Performance. Tokushima's Awa Odori is the most famous of many dance festivals held across Japan during the Obon season in mid August. Awa is the former name for Tokushima Prefecture while Odori means dance. From Shikoku Island, we will board a ferry to Honshu Island where we will stay in a monastery on Mt. Koya complete with authentic Buddhist vegetarian meals. We will experience life very much as a monk would in Japan. Mt Koya is the center of Shingon Buddhism, a Buddhist sect that was introduced to Japan in 805 by Kobo Daishi, one of the most significant personalities in Japan's religious history. The temple complex of over 100 temples is located on a mountain top, surrounded by cedar trees and mountain peaks.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Sekishoin or similar class

Day 8 Mt Koya (Morning Ceremony / Okunoin Temple / Kongobuji Temple / Danjo Garan)

After morning ceremony at the temple, we will visit Okunoin Temple, the heart of Mt. Koya. Okunoin is the site of the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi (also known as Kukai), the founder of Shingon Buddhism and one of the most revered persons in the religious history of Japan. Then visit to Kongo Buji Temple, the head temple of Shingon Buddhism, the sect introduced to Japan by Kobo Daishi in 805 and headquartered on Mt Koya. Danjo Garan is one of the two most sacred sites in Mt Koya. In the 9th century, Mt Koya was founded on this very ground. At that time Kobo Daishi held a groundbreaking ceremony and then dedicated his life to the construction of Danjo Garan.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

Hotel Elserine Osaka or similar class (NOTE 3 & 4)

NOTE 3: 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 4: 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 9 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 5: If you would like to stay longer in Japan, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.