

## Best of Japan Tour Winter with Japanese Alps: Kawazu Cherry Blossoms & Snow Monkeys 2017 - 2/18

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

Tour Code: GTN1868604

### Tour Information

**Land cost: from USD \$4098**

**Single supplement: USD \$880**

**Tour duration: 12 days 11 nights**

**Destination:**

*Tokyo / Hakone / Kawazu / Lake Kawaguchi /  
 Matsumoto / Yudanaka / Takayama / Shirakawa-go /  
 Kanazawa / Kyoto / Uji / Nara / Osaka / Himeji /  
 Kurashiki / Hiroshima / Shimanami Kaido / Oobokeyko  
 Gorge / Kotohira / Takamatsu / Kobe*

**Tour cost includes:**

- 10 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
- 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. Feb 18, 2017	Wed. Mar 1, 2017	USD \$4098.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>

# 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 / 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. 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 Rainbow Bridge.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

## **Day 3 Hakone (Lake Ashi Cruise), Kawazu (Nanadaru Falls / Kawazu Cherry Blossom Festival)**

Travel to Hakone, which is among Japan's most popular hot-spring resorts, and view the forested slopes of Hakone National Park. We will cruise around Lake Ashi will be taken not on just any boat, but on a pirate ship. There are three different ships called Royal II, Victory and Vasa. Each ship has something unique as with each port. Lake Ashi is famous for having Mount Fuji in the background in combination with the lake, for example. Travel to Kawazu to visit to the Nanadaru Falls, or Seven Waterfalls, Kanidaru, Odaru, Kamadaru, Ebidaru, Hebidaru, Shokeidaru and Deidaru. The falls differ in sizes with the smallest one, Kanidaru, just 3 feet wide and 6 feet tall. The largest waterfall, Odaru, is about 20 feet wide and 100 feet high. Then, enjoy the famous Kawazu Cherry Blossoms Festival. Kawazu cherry blossoms are known as one of the earliest to bloom in Honshu region. They are different from Somei Yoshino cherry blossoms (the most common kind of sakura in Japan) in that Kawazu cherry blossoms are pink and last longer in full bloom. During the festival, more than one million people visit the town to see cherry trees lined along the Kawazu River in full bloom.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Izu-Imaihama Tokyu Hotel or similar class

## **Day 4 Lake Kawaguchi (Kubota Itchiku Museum / Kachi Kachi Ropeway), Matsumoto (Matsumoto Castle)**

We will depart from Izu to Mt. Fuji on our private coach. Along the way, enjoy the changing scenery, from thick vegetation to lowlands and rolling clouds. At one of shores of Lake Kawaguchi is the Itchiku Kubota Art Museum. The museum displays the beautiful kimonos done by Itchiku Kubota with the tsujigahana dyeing technique. His unfinished masterpiece called the "Symphony of Light," is a kimono 80-piece set depicting the four seasons and his own universe. Currently 40 of the 80 set pieces were completed by Itchiku, the rest was continued by his children. Next, we get ready to ride the Kachi Kachi Ropeway, which often depicts a tanuki (raccoon dog) in its vicinity due to a children's story based on that area. The ropeway extends from the top of Mt. Tenjo to the shores of Lake Kawaguchiko, along the way you can enjoy a spectacular view of Mount Fuji. We will then travel to Matsumoto where we'll visit the photogenic Matsumoto Castle, or Black Crow Castle, dating back over 400 years. Tonight, we will stay at the Onsen Ryokan at Yudanaka, 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:**

Ryokan Biyu no Yado or similar class

## **Day 5 Yudanaka (Snow Monkey Park), Takayama (Old Town / Takayama Jinya)**

This morning Yudanaka gives us the chance to see the famous snow monkeys as they enjoy their hot spring baths. From Yudanaka, 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, a place that creates a sense of tradition and nostalgia. Along the way you'll notice the huge cedar balls hanging from the eaves of several shops - these indicate that the shops are sake shops. 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 6 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 site in the rural area of Shirakawa-go. In this very photogenic village, we will walk past thatched roof farm houses and cultivated fields and see unspoiled Edo period wooden buildings. Once there, we will also go to the Shiroyama Viewpoint, which allows us to have a scenic view of Shirakawa-go from higher grounds. From Shirakawa-go, we will depart to Kanazawa to visit Kenrokuen Garden, one of three most beautiful 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

## **Day 7 Kyoto (Nijo Castle / Nishijin Kimono Show / Golden Pavilion / Kiyomizu Temple / 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 Nijo Castle, built in the early 17th century. Ninomaru-goten, renovated in 1626, is a building renowned as a priceless example of the architectural style of that period. 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. Next is the famous Kiyomizu Temple, best known for its wooden stage that juts out from its main hall, 13 meters above the hillside. 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 picturesque view of Kyoto in the distance. 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 8 Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Shrine), 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. First is 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. Then, we proceed to Uji where we will 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. Popular for its 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 9 Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kurashiki (Canal Area / Ohara Museum of Art)**

Today we take a 2-hour ride by private coach to Himeji to visit the 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. 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. In the afternoon, we will continue our journey to Hiroshima.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel or similar class

## **Day 10 Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park / A-Bomb Museum / Miyajima - Itsukushima Shrine), Shimanami Kaido (Scenic Driving / Kirosoan 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. 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 Kirosoan 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 / Lunch / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

## **Day 11 Oboke Gorge (Oboke Gorge Boat Ride), Kotohira (Kotohira-gu Shrine), Takamatsu (Ritsurin Park), Kobe (Wagyu Beef Dinner)**

After 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 12 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.