

Signature: Classic Japan Tour - Wisteria & Fuji Shibazakura Festival 2018 - 5/4

The finest Japan group travel experience, with a maximum group size 24 guests

Tour Code: GTR1838792

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$6998

Single supplement: USD \$1560

Tour duration: 14 days 13 nights

Destination:

*Ashikaga / Omiya / Tokyo / Hakone / Mt Fuji /
 Matsumoto / Takayama / Shirakawa-go / Kanazawa /
 Kyoto / Nara / Osaka / Hiroshima / Miyajima Island /
 Kurashiki / Himeji / Kobe*

Tour cost includes:

- 11 nights Western style and 2 night Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport or Haneda Airport
- Private 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 7 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. May 7, 2017	Sat. May 20, 2017	USD \$6998.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Signature	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Fri. May 4, 2018	Thu. May 17, 2018	USD \$6998.00	Tokyo	Osaka	Signature	View Tour

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTR1838792

Day 1 Tokyo Narita Airport or Haneda Airport

Welcome to Tokyo! You will be picked up from the Airport and taken to the hotel.

Hotel:

Hotel New Otani Tokyo or similar class

NOTE 1: If you wish to stay extra nights before the tour starts, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.

Day 2 Tochigi (Ashikaga Flower Park), Omiya (Omiya Bonsai Museum)

Today we will first visit the Ashikaga Flower Park in the Tochigi Prefecture. There, you will find the Great Wisteria Tree of more than 150 years of age, which is designated as a Natural Monument in Tochigi. Not only will you be shaded by the Great Wisteria Tree, but as you venture through the park the different colored wisteria will decorate your walk from above. Below the various flowers, like azaleas, will complement the hanging wisteria throughout the Ashikaga Flower Park. Next, we will head to the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum where you will learn about bonsai. There over 100 bonsai masterpieces at the museum. Then after we will have the chance to go around the Omiya Bonsai Village where we will enter the 5 nurseries kept by 5 different artisans.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Hotel New Otani Tokyo or similar class

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Day 3 Tokyo (Imperial Palace / Tokyo Edo Museum / Asakusa Sensoji Temple / Tokyo SkyTree)

The Imperial Palace is located on the former grounds of the Edo Castle, and it is the current residence of the Imperial family. The Edo-Tokyo Museum provides an interactive exhibit to Tokyo's past. Then, onwards to Asakusa Sensoji Temple, site of the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo and the Kaminarimon ("Thunder Gate") is symbolic of Asakusa and all of Tokyo. The newest addition to Tokyo is the Tokyo Skytree, which is the new television broadcasting tower. Now, the Tokyo Skytree is the tallest building in the city. You'll have a great view from the highest observation decks in Japan.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Hotel New Otani Tokyo or similar class

Day 4 Hakone (Lake Ashi Cruise), Fuji Five Lakes (Fuji Shibazakura Festival)

Travel to Hakone, which is among Japan's most popular hot-spring resorts, and view the forested slopes of Hakone National Park. The cruise around Lake Ashi will not be taken 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 as the background to its serene waters. Afterwards we will head to Fuji Five Lakes located at the base of Mount Fuji. The Fuji Shibazakura Festival will be near Lake Motosu. There are about 800,000 stalks of shibazakura, "moss phlox," on display for the Fuji Shibazakura Festival. Shibazakura fields are adorned in hues of purple, pink and white, which contrasts to the greenery of Mount Fuji in the background. Tonight, enjoy unparalleled service and kaiseki cuisine at a top-rated ryokan (traditional inn) in Lake Kawaguchi.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Kawaguchiko Onsen Kozantei Ubuya or similar class

Day 5 Mt Fuji, Matsumoto (Matsumoto Castle / Wasabi Farm)

We will stop at Mt. Fuji 5th station (depending on weather) to admire the world famous peak and enjoy spectacular views over the Fuji Five Lakes. From there, we drive across Honshu to the breathtaking Japanese Alps. Rice farms dominate the valleys, while lush forests blanket the mountains. We will visit Matsumoto Castle, also known as, Crow Castle for the black color adorning the exterior walls. Close to the Matsumoto area is Azumino City where one of the largest wasabi farms is located. The wasabi fields are maintained with networks of small streams utilizing the water from the Northern Alps. The shops and restaurants feature a wide variety of wasabi flavored products including wasabi ice cream.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Assiopia Takayama Resort or similar class

Day 6 Takayama (Morning Market / Takayama Yatai Kaikan / Kusakabe Heritage House / Old Town)

Takayama is famous for the artisans and craftsmen with traditions continuing to this day from the 9th century. The day starts off with a visit to the Morning Market, where snacks, farm products, and local crafts are sold. The Takayama Yatai (floats) Kaikan Museum features elaborately decorated floats, which are over 700 years old. The yatai demonstrate the legendary craftsmanship of Takayama. Afterwards is a visit to the Kusakabe Heritage House, which is one of the oldest merchant homes in Takayama open to the public. Lastly, the exploration of Sanmach Suji, one of the three Old Town streets that have survived in beautiful state with some businesses that have been around for centuries.

Meals:

Breakfast

Hotel:

Assiocio Takayama Resort or similar class

Day 7 Shirakawa-go (Shiroyama Viewpoint - Gassho-zukuri Minkaen - Mochi Making - Wada-ke House), Kanazawa (Kenrokuen Garden). Train to Kyoto.

Shirakawa-go is home of the UNESCO designated Gassho-styled ("praying hands") farmhouses. First is the Shiroyama Viewpoint, where great views of Ogimachi Village can be seen. Next is the Gassho-zukuri Minkaen open air museum where farmhouses and other structures were relocated to the area. Here you'll experience making mochi the traditional way, which means swinging a wooden mallet. The Wada-ke House was owned by the one of the wealthiest families in Ogimachi, and is now a public museum. The Kenrokuen in Kanazawa is classified as one of the three most beautiful landscape gardens in Japan. This afternoon we board the Thunderbird train for a rail journey to Kyoto for three nights.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

The Okura Kyoto or similar class

Day 8 Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Shrine / Nijo Castle / Golden Pavilion / Visit to a Traditional Wooden Townhouse to learn about Origami, Calligraphy and the art of Ikebana)

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 or a nostalgic photograph. Then we travel to the Nijo Castle, a former residence of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, first Shogun of the Edo Period. Afterwards is the Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji) known for the upper two stories that are covered in gold leaf designs, which creates a beautiful reflection on the water surrounding it. Continue on to a traditional wooden townhouse to learn about origami, calligraphy, and the art of Ikebana. Let your hands bend and fold traditional paper into an crane, rabbit, or a flower with a bright designs. Then, learn swift brush movements for Japanese characters and understand why calligraphy is considered one of the best arts of Asia with every stroke. Lastly, experience the art of flower arrangements and harmonize the delicate flowers with one another in this peaceful and traditional practice.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

The Okura Kyoto or similar class

Day 9 Kyoto (Kimono Experience / Sanjusangendo Hall / Kiyomizu Temple / Kodaiji Temple - Zen Meditation, Tea Ceremony / Gion - Kyoto Cuisine with Maiko Dinner)

Finally, everyone will experience wearing kimonos (Japanese traditional garments), and wear it for the entire day. Start the tour with a visit to the Sanjusangendo Hall, where 1001 statues of Kannon, Buddha of compassion, are housed. Next is a visit to 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. A scene often photographed for its majestic features. Then at the Kodaiji Temple, belonging to the Rinzaï sect of Zen Buddhism, experience Zen meditation in a real temple. After practicing meditation, participate in a real tea ceremony. The ceremonial preparation and presentation of matcha, ground up green tea was influenced by Zen Buddhism. Lastly, we will tour Gion, the old Geisha Quarters, along with Pontocho, whose cobblestone alleys vibrate with night life. For dinner the finest Kyoto Cuisine made with ingredients representative of the season will be served, and a Maiko (apprentice Geisha) will provide entertainment for her guests. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about her profession and learn why they must train for years before finally becoming Geisha.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

The Okura Kyoto or similar class

Day 10 Nara (Todaiji Temple / Deer Park), Osaka (Japanese Cooking Class / Taiko Lesson), Bullet Train to Hiroshima

We begin the day with Nara's Todaiji temple, which is over 1000 years old and home of the Daibutsu, world's largest bronze Buddha statue. Around the temple is the Nara Deer Park where visitors can feed the free-roaming deer with biscuits sold in the vicinity. The deers are considered to be sacred messengers of the gods in Shinto religion and thus have been designated natural treasures. Afterwards, we go onto Osaka where we will learn how to cook Japanese Food and play the traditional taiko (festival drums). Then, we ride one of Japan's fastest trains, the bullet train (shinkansen), all the way to Hiroshima, the place of the first atomic bombing.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Hiroshima or similar class

Day 11 Miyajima Island (Itsukushima Shrine / Senjokaku Hall / Daisho-in Temple / Mount Misen - Ropeway)

From your hotel, a ferry will bring you to the famed Miyajima Island, holy site of Shinto, where the Itsukushima Shrine resides. The often photographed floating torii gate is iconic of the Itsukushima Shrine because during high tide the base is covered, giving the illusion of it "floating." Nearby is the Senjokaku Hall, which is the length of 1000 tatami mats. The building was commissioned by Toyotomi Hideyoshi to chant Buddha sutras, but remains incomplete due to his passing. At the base of Mount Misen is the Daisho-in Temple, one of the significant places for Shingon Buddhism. Then using the Mount Misen Ropeway, we'll reach the highest peak of Miyajima Island where several more buildings of the Daisho-in Temple reside. From here you can see the amazing foliage around the island.

Meals:

Breakfast

Hotel:

Grand Prince Hotel Hiroshima or similar class

Day 12 Hiroshima (Peace Memorial Park / A-bomb Museum), Saijo (Kamotsuru Sake Brewery - Kura Study Tour, Sake Tasting)

Today we will visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, also known as Genbaku Dome. This is the location where, on August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped. It now serves as a reminder of hope to one day live in a world without nuclear weapons. The A-bomb Museum goes through the history of Hiroshima and the aftermath of the destruction caused by the atomic bomb. Next is Saijo, an area known for their sake breweries. In the Kamotsuru Sake Brewery, you'll have the opportunity to learn about the process in making sake. The temperature of the kura (cellar) is maintained by the thick walls, which allows a natural balance without the need of air conditioners. After the tour you'll have the chance to try a variety of sake in their tasting room.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Washu Highland Hotel or similar class

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Day 13 Kurashiki (Canal Area), Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kobe (Kobe Beef Dinner)

Kurashiki is a city in the Okayama Prefecture, where a canal is preserved dating back to the Edo Period. The area was mainly used as a rice distribution center with many storehouses. Many of those buildings have been converted to museums, shops, and cafes. The Himeji Castle (White Heron Castle) in Hyogo Prefecture is one of the twelve castles still in its original state. This castle painted in white is well preserved and built like a maze. From Himeji Castle dinner will be enjoyed in Kobe. The city Kobe is famous for their beef, which is a prized delicacy. The meal will be enjoyed teppanyaki style where the chef will cook the meal in front of you.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Hotel Okura Kobe or similar class

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Day 14 Tour End

After breakfast, our tour officially ends. Checkout time is 11 am, free for leisure until transfer to Osaka Kansai Airport or Itami Airport for departure.

Meals:
Breakfast

NOTE 2: If you would like to stay longer in Japan, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.