

Charms of Southern Japan: Autumn Leaves Special Tour 2017

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

Tour Code: GTU1534638

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$2898

Single supplement: USD \$560

Tour duration: 8 days 7 nights

Destination:

Himeji / Kurashiki / Takamatsu / Shimanami Kaido / Hiroshima / Kitsuki / Beppu / Takachiho / Nagasaki

Tour cost includes:

- 6 nights Western style and 1 night Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Osaka Kansai 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
- 4 lunches and 4 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
Sat. Nov 18, 2017	Sat. Nov 25, 2017	USD \$2898.00	Osaka	Fukuoka	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

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Day 1 Osaka Kansai Airport

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

Hotel:

Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class (NOTE 1 & 2)

NOTE 1: If you wish to stay in the center of Osaka for the first night instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport, we can arrange for you to stay at Hotel Elseraine Osaka (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 Itami Airport (ITM) instead of Kansai International Airport (KIX), we can arrange for you to stay in the center of Osaka (Hotel Elseraine Osaka or similar class) instead of Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport. 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 after 11:00 AM. For guests arriving in Terminal 2, 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 Himeji (Himeji Castle), Kurashiki (Canal Area / Ohara Museum of Art)

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. 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. Tonight, we will stay in a spa hotel in Kurashiki Yuga Onsen, where you can soak in the therapeutic waters of a spa bath and feast on a traditional Japanese Kaiseki banquet dinner.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Kurashiki Yuga Onsen Hotel Santoka or similar class

Day 3 Seto Ohashi Bridge, Takamatsu (Shikoku Mura Village / Ritsurin Park)

After your Japanese breakfast at the hotel, we will cross the inland sea through the Seto-ohashi Bridge to Shikoku Island. Seto-ohashi Bridge is a collective term for the six bridges that connects Japan's main island of Honshu to the island of Shikoku, passing over five small islands in the Seto Inland Sea. These beautiful bridges took 40 years and a tremendous amount of money to build. They are the essence of all available bridge-building technologies. 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.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Imabari Kokusai Hotel or similar class

Day 4 Shimanami Kaido (Scenic Driving / Kiroosan 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 Kiroosan 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

Hotel:

Sheraton Hotel Hiroshima or similar class

Day 5 Shinkansen to Kokura, then board the "Sonic" express train to Kitsuki, Kitsuki (Kitsuki Samurai Districts - Ohara Residence), Beppu (Beppu Hells / Mt. Takasaki Monkey Park), Takachiho (Takachiho Shrine - Yokagura Performance)

This morning, we will take a ride on the top speed Shinkansen bullet train to Kokura, then board the "Sonic" express train to Kitsuki where we will visit the Kitsuki Samurai Districts. From Kitsuki, 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, we drive west 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. 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 6 Takachiho (Takachiho Gorge / Amano Iwato Shrine), Ferry from Kumamoto to Shimabara

After breakfast, 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 lunch, proceed to Kumamoto and take a 30 minute ferry crossing the Ariake Sea to Shimabara. Tonight we stay in a western style hotel in Nagasaki.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Nagasaki Gloverhill or similar class

Day 7 Nagasaki (Dejima / Glover Garden / Gunkanjima Island), Fukuoka (Wagyu Dinner)

After breakfast, we will visit Dejima, an island with a 400- year history of Dutch trade. Next, visit to the Glover Gardens, an open air museum where we see a fine collection of historic mansions of former Western residents of Nagasaki. Then, head to Gunkanjima Island, a small island located about 20 kilometers from Nagasaki Port. Until 1974, the island served as a coal mine, and more than 5000 residents 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. In the afternoon, we depart Nagasaki to Fukuoka, where we will savor the world famous Wagyu beef.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Hotel Nikko Fukuoka or similar class

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Day 8 Tour End

After breakfast, our tour officially ends. Checkout time is 11 am, free for leisure until transfer Fukuoka Airport for departure.

Meals:
Breakfast

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