

# Highlights of Korea and Japan: Cherry Blossom Tour 2018 - 3/27, 4/3

*Explore two beautiful countries in Asia - Korea & Japan - during cherry blossom season*

Tour Code: GTV0546832

## Tour Information

**Land cost: from USD \$3398**

**Single supplement: USD \$880**

**Tour duration: 12 days 11 nights**

**Destination:**

*Korea (Andong / Gyeongju /Seoul), Japan (Nara / Uji / Kyoto / Koka / Hikone / Hakone / Mt Fuji / Tokyo)*

**Tour cost includes:**

- 10 nights Western style and 1 night Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Incheon Airport & Osaka Kansai Airport
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Private coach transfers between destinations in Korea & Japan
- Comprehensive escorted with AJT professional English speaking tour guide
- Gratuities

**Meals**

- Breakfast everyday
- 8 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
Tue. Mar 28, 2017	Sat. Apr 8, 2017	USD \$3398.00	Seoul	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>
Tue. Apr 4, 2017	Sat. Apr 15, 2017	USD \$3398.00	Seoul	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>

### 2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Tue. Mar 27, 2018	Sat. Apr 7, 2018	USD \$3398.00	Seoul	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>
Tue. Apr 3, 2018	Sat. Apr 14, 2018	USD \$3398.00	Seoul	Tokyo	Deluxe	<a href="#">View Tour</a>

# Itinerary

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## **Day 1 Incheon Airport**

Welcome to Korea! An AJT representative will greet you and escort you to the hotel.

### **Hotel:**

Best Western Kukdo Hotel or similar class

## **Day 2 Andong (Andong Hahoe Village), Gyeongju (Gyeongju National Museum)**

Start your tour of Korea with a visit to the traditional Andong Hahoe Village, a UNESCO Heritage site. Popularly known as the birth of Korea's Confucianism, the place is being preserved for its thatched-roof houses and villages. This picturesque village is also known for its mask dance. Should time / weather permits, one can enjoy the traditional performance amidst the picturesque surroundings. After, we transfer to Gyeongju, the ancient capital of the Shilla Dynasty for the Gyeongju National Museum. Divided into 3 main halls & an outdoor garden exhibit area, the museum showcases mainly ancient Korean Archaeology found in the area. The artifacts range from prehistoric times to the Three Kingdom Period, as well as items buried with the Royalties in the Tombs of Cheongmacheon area.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Gyeongju Kolon or similar class

## **Day 3 Gyeongju (UNESCO site Bulguksa & Seokkuram Grotto / Cheomseongdae)**

This morning, we visit the UNESCO preserved site of Bulguksa Temple. Built in year 528, the name of the temple is literally translated as "Temple of Buddha's Land" or "Buddha's World Temple". It aims to realize the blissfulness of the Buddhist scriptures where the mortal being's suffering is being released. The steps leading to the temple being called the "Blue Cloud Bridge" & "White Cloud Bridge" as well as the decorative elements in the architecture are all symbolic of the temple's name. This afternoon, visit the Seokkuram Grotto, a small and quaint temple which houses an elegant but majestic statue of Buddha. Despite it's size, the exquisiteness of the temple's architecture suggest that it was being used by the Royalty and nobilities in ancient time. Our last stop for the day is the Cheomseongdae, the oldest astronomical observatory in Asia.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Daegu Grand or similar class

## **Day 4 Seoul (Gyeongbuk Palace / Drive Pass Presidential Blue House / Presidential Museum / Jogyesa / Insa-Dong Antique Streets)**

We head back to Seoul for the Gyeongbuk Palace, the main and most grand of the five palaces. Construction started in 1300's, and in the 1400's its beauty flourished. Unfortunately, a few fires destroyed it and was eventually burnt down during the Japanese occupation. It was reconstructed several times since and now brought back to its former glory. Enjoy your walk in the palace grounds as your guide brief you through the various building. Next, we drive pass the Presidential Blue House, home to the current President of Korea. Please note that no photography is allowed. Next, we visit the Presidential's Museum, set up in 2010 to co-incide with APEC meeting held in Seoul the same year. The museum encompasses the past, present and the future of Seoul as well as the entire Korea. The Jogyesa is considered the "head temple" of Buddhist temples in Korea. From here, walk the streets of Insa-Dong, often considered the "Mary's Alley of Seoul" or antique streets. The traditional buildings and wide array of traditional souvenirs are absolutely mesmerizing.)

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Best Western Kukdo Hotel or similar class

## **Day 5 Seoul (DeMilitarised Zone: Imjinggak - Freedom Bridge - 3rd Tunnel - DORA Observatory / Nanta “Cookin” Show / Dongdaemun Market )**

Depart for Imjinggak at DMZ, see the Freedom Bridge and Mangbaeda which is an altar for the Koreans to come pay respect to their families in North Korea. It is especially crowded during the Lunar New Year and Korean Thanksgiving Holidays as this is the closest the families can get to North Korea. After, transferring to the DMZ, we take a shuttle bus for a ride through the 3rd tunnel and DORA Observatory. One can see parts of North Korea from the observation deck. The Media Hall offers an insight of the disparities between the divided country. After, transfer for lunch and journey back to Seoul. This evening, get ready for some non-verbal comedy at the Nanta ‘Cookin’ Show. Embodying traditional Korean drumming skills into a modern kitchen scene, this light hearted comedy married with intense drumming will leave you thumping for more! After, we visit the famous Dongdaemun Market where you can find wares of every kind!

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Best Western Kukdo Hotel or similar class

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## Day 6 Incheon Airport, Osaka Kansai Airport

After breakfast, free for leisure until your transfer to Seoul Incheon Airport for your flight to Japan. Upon arrival Osaka, an AJT representative will meet you at the arrival gate and direct you to the hotel.

**Meals:**

Breakfast

**Hotel:**

Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport or similar class

NOTE 1: The airport transfer is available at 10:00 AM from the hotel to Seoul Incheon Airport, please arrange your flight departing after 2:00 PM.

## **Day 7 Nara (Todai-ji Temple / Nara Deer Park), Uji (Green Tea Ceremony), Kyoto (Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum / Fushimi Inari Shrine)**

In the morning you will travel to Nara, the oldest capital city of Japan, by private coach. 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. We will continue our tour to Uji where you can experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Then, visit a sake museum in the scenic and historic Fushimi district, which is home to more than twenty breweries and is considered one of the brewing capitals in Japan. At the Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum, you will be introduced to the fascinating history of sake brewing with its nostalgic buildings, tasting experience, and valuable collection of traditional brewing tools. Then 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. We will stay two nights in Kyoto.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

## **Day 8 Kyoto (Golden Pavilion / Ryoan-ji Rock Garden / Nishijin Kimono Show / Kiyomizu Temple / Maruyama Park / Gion Geisha District)**

Today we will continue our tour of Kyoto, once the capital of Japan and still considered its cultural center. We will begin with the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), a temple 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 kimono fashion show. Then, we will visit 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 during the spring and the fall seasons, 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 Quarter, and Pontocho, whose cobblestone alleys vibrate with night life.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Dinner

### **Hotel:**

Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto or similar class

## **Day 9 Koka (Miho Museum / Koka Ninja Mansion), Hikone (Hikone Castle), Shinkansen Bullet Train Ride**

This morning we will visit the famous Miho Museum. The Miho Museum has 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. 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. We will then continue to Hikone to visit 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. Next, our group will experience a Shinkansen bullet train ride, 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 10 Hakone (Hakone Ropeway / Owakudani), Mt Fuji, Tokyo (Shibuya - Shibuya Crossing - Hachiko Statue)**

After enjoying Japanese breakfast at the hotel, we will travel to Hakone and take a 20 minute ropeway from Togendai to Owakundani. Much of the area here is considered an active volcanic zone since its creation from the eruption of Mount Hakone some 3,000 years ago. There, you can experience hot springs and hot rivers, where sulfurous fumes still linger. Owakundani also has splendid views of Mount Fuji in good weather. From Hakone we will proceed to Mt. Fuji on our private coach. Along the way, enjoy the changing scenery, from thick vegetation to lowlands and rolling clouds. We will stop at Mt. Fuji 5th station (depending on weather) to admire the world famous peak. In the afternoon we will travel to Tokyo. Our last visit for this day is Shibuya. We will be able to see the famed Shibuya Crossing in action and cross the street with the crowd. We will then take photos with the Hachiko Statue at the crossing, which is a monument dedicated to a loyal dog that waited even after his master passed away.

### **Meals:**

Breakfast / Lunch

### **Hotel:**

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class

## **Day 11 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 vehicles and items which were used in the past are placed on display for museum goers. 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:**

Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class (NOTE 2 & 3)

NOTE 2: If you wish to stay in the center of Tokyo for the last 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 full instructions for you to get to the airport in advance.

NOTE 3: If you will be flying out from Haneda Airport (HND) instead of Narita Airport (NRT), we can arrange for you to stay at Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo (or similar class) instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu. 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 Narita Airport can be reached by hotel shuttle bus.

**Meals:**  
Breakfast

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