Itinerary

15 Day Complete Japan With Hiroshima Small Group Tour

***IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

DAY 1: Arrive Osaka

On arrival at Osaka Airport, make your way to your first hotel, where you can settle in and relax after your journey. Once checked in, the remainder of the day is yours to explore at your own pace. You might choose to stroll around the nearby area, enjoy a meal at a local restaurant, or simply unwind in preparation for the exciting days ahead.
MEALS: Nil

OVERNIGHT: Odysis Suites Osaka Airport Hotel or similar

DAY 2: Osaka ~ Kobe

In the morning, we begin our journey with a visit to Osaka Castle, one of Japan's most iconic and historically significant fortresses. Constructed in the late 16th century, Osaka Castle's five-story tower, with its vibrant vermillion exterior and gleaming gold-accented roof, stands as a testament to Japan's feudal past. Take time to explore the beautifully landscaped grounds, including its lush gardens, before ascending the castle for panoramic views of Osaka's skyline and learning about the castle's storied role in Japanese history.
Next, we'll head to Dotonbori, Osaka's bustling heart of food and entertainment. This lively area is a feast for the senses, with countless local delicacies to try, from takoyaki (octopus' balls) to okonomiyaki (savoory pancakes). Stroll through shopping districts filled with unique boutiques, and don't forget to snap a photo with the iconic Glico running man sign—a symbol of Osaka's vibrant spirit.

In the afternoon, we journey to Kobe to visit the Kobe Earthquake Memorial Museum, a heartfelt tribute to the resilience of the city following the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. This impactful museum offers insights into the earthquake's effects and Kobe's remarkable recovery, honouring the strength and unity of its people.

This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner where you'll get to know your fellow travellers and share in the excitement of the journey ahead.

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: SK Hotel Kobe Station or similar

DAY 3: Kobe ~ Kurashiki ~ Hiroshima

After breakfast, we set out on our journey to Hiroshima, a city profoundly marked by its history as the first site of an atomic bombing on 6 August 1945. Although largely destroyed, Hiroshima has since become a symbol of peace and resilience, welcoming visitors from around the world who come to pay their respects and reflect on its enduring legacy.

On our way to Hiroshima, we'll make a stop in the charming town of Kurashiki. Renowned for its beautifully preserved Edo-period merchant district, Kurashiki offers a step back in time with its picturesque canals, traditional, white-walled warehouses, and cobbled streets. Take some time to stroll through this historic area, soaking in the nostalgic ambiance and exploring artisan shops, quaint cafes, and small museums that showcase the town's cultural heritage.

After our visit to Kurashiki, we continue our journey to Hiroshima, where the evening is yours to relax or explore the local surroundings, perhaps taking a quiet walk around the city to experience its peaceful and reflective atmosphere.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Mystays Hiroshima Peace Park or similar

DAY 4: Hiroshima ~ Okayama

Today, we begin with a visit to the serene Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima Island, one of Japan's most cherished UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Known for its iconic torii gate and main shrine, both built over water, this site creates a breathtaking scene as the structures appear to float gracefully on the sea during high tide. The vermillion torii gate, framed by lush mountains and the Seto Inland Sea, is one of Japan's most photographed views. Wander through the shrine's peaceful pathways, taking in the natural beauty and tranquillity of Miyajima, an island often referred to as the "Island of the Gods."
After this serene start, we head back to Hiroshima to visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. This deeply moving site commemorates the lives lost in the atomic bombing of 1945 and serves as a powerful symbol of peace and resilience. As you walk through the park, you'll see the A-Bomb Dome, one of the few structures that survived the blast, as well as the Cenotaph for the victims, where thousands come to pay their respects. The Atomic Bomb Museum provides insight into the events of WWII and the experiences of survivors, making it a place for reflection and a reminder of the importance of peace.

In the late afternoon, we continue our journey to Okayama, where we'll settle in for a relaxing evening. Enjoy time at your leisure to unwind, explore the city, or savour a meal at one of Okayama's local restaurants.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Mitsui Garden Hotel Okayama or similar

DAY 5: Okayama ~ Nara ~ Kyoto

Today, we journey northward, beginning with a stop at Himeji to visit the breathtaking Himeji Castle, one of Japan's first UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Registered in 1993, this stunning white fortress is a prime example of samurai-era architectural brilliance and historical grandeur. Often called the "White Heron Castle" due to its elegant white appearance, Himeji Castle has withstood centuries of change, preserving its original structure and design as one of Japan's most beautiful castles. Take time to explore its vast

grounds, climb the central tower, and enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding city and mountains. Afterward, we continue to Nara, where we'll take a short walk to visit some of the area's main attractions. Our first stop is Todaiji Temple and its impressive Great Hall, home to one of the largest bronze Buddha statues in the world. The scale and craftsmanship of this temple are awe-inspiring, reflecting Nara's important place in Japan's cultural history.

As we make our way back to the station, you'll stroll through Nara Deer Park, where you'll encounter Nara's famous free-roaming deer. With about 1,200 deer in the park, these gentle creatures have become symbols of the city and are considered messengers of the gods in Shinto belief. You may even have the chance to feed them with specially sold crackers, a fun and unique experience in this beautiful setting.

Tonight, you'll enjoy a comfortable stay in Kyoto, with time to rest and prepare for more exploration ahead.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Oriental Hotel Kyoto Rokujo or similar

DAY 6: Kyoto Free Day

Today is a free day to explore Kyoto at your own pace.
MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Karasuma Kyoto Hotel or similar

DAY 7: Kyoto Bamboo Grove ~ Kanazawa

This morning, we begin with a visit to the breathtaking Kinkakuji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion. This iconic Zen temple, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is famous for its two upper floors, entirely covered in thin layers of pure gold leaf. Each floor represents a different architectural style—Shinden, Samurai, and Zen—showcasing the temple's unique design and historical significance. Reflected beautifully on the surrounding pond, the Golden Pavilion creates a serene, almost magical view that has captivated visitors for centuries.
After admiring Kinkakuji, we board the bus towards the scenic Arashiyama District in Western Kyoto. Here, we'll visit Togetsu Bridge, an enduring landmark of the area for over 400 years, often surrounded by cherry blossoms in spring and colourful leaves in autumn. Nearby, we'll step into the famous Bamboo Grove, where towering bamboo stalks create a peaceful, otherworldly atmosphere. Wandering through this enchanting forest feels like stepping into another realm, and the gentle sway of the bamboo in the breeze adds to the serene experience.

Following our time in Arashiyama, we continue our journey to the culturally rich city of Kanazawa, where you'll have the chance to experience more of Japan's preserved traditions and beautiful landscapes.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Mystays Premier Kanazawa or similar

DAY 8: Kanazawa City Tour

Today, we dive into the rich history and culture of Kanazawa, a city renowned for its well-preserved Edo-period charm and traditional arts. Our exploration begins with a visit to Buke Yashiki, the samurai district where high-ranking samurais once lived during the Edo period. Walking through these carefully preserved streets, you'll gain insight into the lives of these elite warriors and the architectural styles that defined their homes. Some residences even have restored interiors, offering a glimpse into samurai life, complete with gardens and authentic decor.

Next, we head to Higashi Chaya, Kanazawa's historic teahouse district, where beautifully maintained wooden buildings line the cobbled streets. This area, once a hub for geishas and tea ceremonies, allows you to experience Japan's refined cultural heritage firsthand. Stroll through these atmospheric streets, explore artisan shops, and perhaps enjoy a cup of matcha at a local teahouse to fully embrace the spirit of old Kanazawa.

Our journey continues with a visit to Kenrokuen Garden, widely considered one of Japan's "three great gardens" and often praised as the most exquisite of them all. This garden is a masterpiece of Japanese landscaping, blending water features, stone lanterns, winding paths, and seasonal flora to create a serene and visually stunning experience. Each season brings its own beauty here, from cherry blossoms in spring to fiery autumn foliage.

To finish our day, we head to Omicho Market, Kanazawa's largest fresh food market, brimming with vibrant stalls selling everything from fresh seafood to local produce. Here, you can browse a variety of culinary delights and perhaps sample some of Kanazawa's famous seafood. Omicho Market is the perfect place to soak up the local atmosphere, interact with friendly vendors, and try regional specialities.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Mystays Premier Kanazawa or similar

DAY 9: Kanazawa ~ Shirakawago ~ Takayama

Today, we journey to the charming and picturesque region of Shirakawago for a half-day guided sightseeing tour, where you'll experience the timeless beauty of one of Japan's most well-preserved rural villages. Accompanied by a knowledgeable guide, we'll explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site, famed for its unique gassho-zukuri (praying hands) architecture. These traditional thatched-roof houses, some of which are over 200 years old, were designed with steeply sloped roofs to withstand heavy snowfall, a characteristic of the area's rugged winters. The distinctive architecture and tranquil village setting offer a rare glimpse into Japan's rural history and agricultural traditions.
As we wander through Shirakawago, you'll have the opportunity to step inside one of these historic homes, learning about the craftsmanship, culture, and ways of life of the people who have lived here for generations. The serene mountain setting, surrounded by rice paddies and forested hills, makes this village feel like a step back in time.

After our visit to Shirakawago, we continue to Takayama, a charming town nestled in the mountainous Gifu Prefecture. Known for its well-preserved Edo-period merchant streets, Takayama flourished as a vibrant trading centre and remains steeped in traditional Japanese culture. Enjoy time to explore the town's narrow streets lined with wooden houses, sake breweries, and shops selling local crafts and foods. Takayama's atmospheric old town provides a perfect end to our day, offering a sense of Japan's historic charm amid a stunning mountain backdrop.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi-no-Yu or similar

DAY 10: Takayama ~ Matsumoto

Today, we dedicate our day to exploring the charming city of Takayama, nestled in the scenic mountains of Gifu Prefecture. Known for its well-preserved Edo-period architecture and deep cultural roots, Takayama offers an authentic glimpse into traditional Japanese life. We begin by wandering through the beautifully preserved Old Town, where narrow streets are lined with historic wooden buildings, craft shops, and sake breweries. This area, once a bustling merchant centre, retains the atmosphere of Japan's past, allowing you to experience the charm and craftsmanship of this unique mountain town. Next, we'll visit Takayama Jinya, the former local government office during the Edo period, which is the last remaining building of its kind in Japan. Takayama Jinya provides fascinating insights into the administrative practices and daily life of the era. With its tatami-matted rooms, spacious meeting halls, and intricate architectural details, it's a must-see for those interested in Japan's history.

We continue our exploration with a visit to Matsuri no Mori, an impressive museum dedicated to Takayama's famous seasonal festivals, known for their beautifully crafted floats and rich cultural heritage. The museum displays festival floats and features large, vibrant drums and other artifacts that showcase the city's artistry and celebration spirit. It's a perfect place to gain a deeper appreciation for the local traditions that make Takayama such a unique destination.

After a full day of exploring, we board the bus to Matsumoto, where we'll settle in for the night and prepare for more adventures in the days ahead.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Iroha Grand Hotel Matsumoto Eki-Mae or similar

DAY 11: Matsumoto ~ Mt Fuji

Ohayou-gozaimasu! (Good morning!) Today, we begin our journey with a visit to the historic Matsumoto Castle, one of Japan's oldest and most well-preserved castles. Often called the "Crow Castle" for its striking black exterior, Matsumoto Castle is a rare example of an original Japanese fortress, standing proudly as a National Treasure. As we explore the castle's interior, you'll have the chance to climb its ancient wooden staircases and admire panoramic views from the top floor. Learn about its impressive defensive features and fascinating history, from samurai battles to periods of peace.
From Matsumoto, we make our way to the iconic Mount Fuji area. Our first stop is Oshino Hakkai, a picturesque village known for its eight crystal-clear ponds fed by snowmelt from Mount Fuji. The water, naturally filtered through layers of volcanic rock, is exceptionally pure and has become a symbol of tranquillity and beauty in the region. Stroll along the pathways surrounding the ponds, where you can observe the scenic reflections of Mount Fuji and experience the peaceful atmosphere of this traditional Japanese village.

Next, we'll ascend to Mount Fuji's 5th Station, located above the clouds at approximately 2,300 meters. If the weather permits, you'll be treated to breathtaking views of Mount Fuji's summit and the sweeping landscape below. The 5th Station also offers shops, small shrines, and observation points, providing a memorable perspective of Japan's most revered mountain.

In the evening, we'll settle in the Mount Fuji area and enjoy a farewell dinner with your fellow travellers, celebrating the journey we've shared together in this beautiful land.

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: Sun Plaza Hotel Fuji Lake Yamanakako or similar

DAY 12: Mt Fuji ~ Tokyo

Today, we start with a visit to Gotemba Peace Park, a serene spot that offers stunning views of Mount Fuji, weather permitting. As you wander through the park, take in the peaceful surroundings, landscaped gardens, and vibrant pagodas, all framed by the majestic backdrop of Japan's iconic mountain. This tranquil setting provides a perfect opportunity to reflect on the journey so far and capture some unforgettable photos of Fuji towering over the landscape.
Next, we'll embark on a scenic Lake Ashi cruise, where you'll be surrounded by the natural beauty of the Hakone region. As the boat glides across the lake's calm waters, take in the lush hillsides, charming bays, and, on clear days, a view of Mount Fuji in the distance. This peaceful cruise is an ideal way to immerse yourself in the area's natural splendour, with every turn revealing a new aspect of Japan's beautiful landscapes.

After our time in the Mount Fuji area, we'll board the Shinkansen, Japan's high-speed Bullet Train, for a quick and smooth journey to Tokyo. Known for its efficiency and speed, the Shinkansen will whisk us away to the vibrant capital, where you'll settle in for the evening. Tonight, enjoy the city's lively atmosphere and perhaps explore some of Tokyo's renowned dining or shopping districts, as you get ready for more adventures in this incredible metropolis.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Tmark City Hotel Tokyo Omori or similar

DAY 13: Tokyo

Today, we embark on a full-day exploration of Tokyo, taking in the city's most celebrated landmarks and cultural gems. Our journey begins at Tokyo Tower, an iconic symbol of modern Japan. Ascend to the observation deck for sweeping views of the Tokyo skyline, where you can see how this vibrant metropolis stretches out toward the horizon. While here, you'll learn about the tower's history and architectural significance as a beacon of post-war Japan.
Next, we head to the bustling Shibuya Crossing, one of the busiest pedestrian intersections in the world. From the nearby pedestrian overpass, watch the organised chaos as hundreds of people cross from all directions at once—an iconic scene that captures Tokyo's energy and dynamism. Take some time to explore Shibuya's surrounding shopping and dining areas, with everything from trendy boutiques to unique cafes.

For lunch, we'll make our way to the Tsukiji Outer Market, a lively area of food stalls and small restaurants offering some of the freshest seafood in the city. Sample delicious sushi, sashimi, and other local delicacies while soaking up the vibrant sights, sounds, and aromas of this bustling market.

Our afternoon takes us to Senso-ji Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo's oldest and most revered temple. Stroll through Nakamise-dori, the bustling shopping street leading to the temple, lined with shops selling

traditional snacks, crafts, and souvenirs. Within the temple grounds, explore the main hall, the Jokoro incense burner, and the surrounding pagodas, immersing yourself in the spiritual atmosphere. Enjoy a pause at a nearby café or tea house for a moment of relaxation over matcha or a traditional sweet treat.

We end our day at the Imperial Palace, the residence of Japan's Emperor. As we explore the palace grounds, you'll be introduced to the rich history of Japan's imperial family, learning about their customs and the site's importance to Japanese heritage. Wander through the Ninomaru Garden, a serene landscape of seasonal flowers and traditional landscaping, and view the ruins of the old castle tower for a glimpse into Japan's feudal past.

After a full day of discovery, return to your accommodation to unwind and reflect on the rich culture and history you've experienced in Tokyo.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Tmark City Hotel Tokyo Omori or similar

DAY 14: Tokyo Free Day

Today is yours to experience Tokyo at your own pace, giving you the chance to immerse yourself in the city's captivating blend of tradition and modernity. Whether you wish to wander through ancient temples, explore vibrant shopping districts, or relax in tranquil gardens, Tokyo offers a wealth of experiences tailored to every interest.
If you prefer a leisurely day, consider selecting a single district to explore in depth, allowing you to truly absorb its unique atmosphere. For a historical experience, Asakusa is ideal, with its traditional streets leading to the famous Senso-ji Temple, surrounded by markets filled with artisanal crafts and local treats. Ginza, Tokyo's luxury shopping haven, invites you to explore high-end boutiques and art galleries or to enjoy a coffee in one of its stylish cafes. For a taste of youth culture and fashion, head to Harajuku, known for its quirky shops, colourful street art, and the peaceful Meiji Shrine nestled in a nearby forest.

Those drawn to nature might spend time in Shinjuku Gyoen Garden, one of Tokyo's most beautiful parks, perfect for a quiet stroll or a relaxed picnic. Alternatively, the serene Rikugien Garden, with its scenic ponds and meticulously landscaped paths, offers a traditional Japanese garden experience right in the heart of the city.

Your guide will be available to offer recommendations and directions, helping you discover the best places to dine, shop, and sightsee, so you can make the most of your day in Tokyo.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Tmark City Hotel Tokyo Omori or similar

DAY 15: End of Tour ~ Depart Tokyo

After enjoying breakfast and checking out, take some time to soak in the last moments of your time in Tokyo. With countless memories of the sights, sounds, and experiences that made this journey special, you'll then make your way to the airport at your own pace, ensuring you arrive with plenty of time for your return flight. Whether you choose to take a taxi, hop on the convenient airport express train, or use another transport option, Tokyo's efficient network ensures a smooth departure.

As you leave Japan, take a moment to reflect on the incredible places, cultural encounters, and new friendships made along the way. We hope this adventure leaves you with a deep appreciation for Japan’s beauty and traditions and memories to last a lifetime. Safe travels, and we look forward to welcoming you on another journey soon.

MEALS: Breakfast