

EXPLORE!



Highlights of Japan

From the bright lights of Tokyo to the tranquil temples of Kyoto, this fast-paced tour explores Japan's highlights. We take time to reflect at Hiroshima, site of the world's first atomic attack before visiting the holy island of Miyajima, dotted with temples and free roaming deer. In Kyoto watch enigmatic Geisha girls and relax in perfectly manicured Zen gardens.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Tokyo** - Explore the bright lights of Shinjuku and the traditional temples of Asakusa
- ★ **Kyoto** - Discover the temples and gardens of Japan's Imperial Capital
- ★ **Miyajima** - View the floating tori gates and explore the Itsukushima Shrine
- ★ **Himeji** - Visit the White Egret Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- ★ **Hiroshima** - Reflect at the Peace Park and Museum
- ★ **Kanazawa** - Visit the preserved homes of Samurai warriors

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Tour begins in Tokyo

Our tour starts in Tokyo, the modern-day capital of Japan. After checking in to our hotel which will be our base for the next two nights, we will enjoy an included dinner with the rest of the group and our Tour Leader.



Accommodation: The B Ikebukuro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Explore Tokyo's neon streets and peaceful gardens

Over one-quarter of the Japanese population live within a 50 km radius of the centre of Tokyo, making it the most populous metropolitan area in the world. The result is a bustling and exciting city - the economic powerhouse of Asia. However, scratching its neon-clad surface reveals a city bursting with history and tradition. A morning stroll to Tokyo's oldest temple, Asakusa, will introduce us to Tokyo's unique culture. We then board a boat for a short journey along the Sumida River. Gaining a totally different perspective of the city, we drift past high rise apartments, secluded gardens and busy warehouses. Arriving in the heart of the city near Hamarikyu Gardens, you may wish to visit the Meiji shrine and Shinjuku area, where the latest electronic gadgets dazzle from glowing shop-fronts.



Accommodation: The B Ikebukuro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Travel on the bullet train to Kanazawa

No trip to Japan would be complete without a journey on a high speed train and this morning we leave Tokyo and board the Shinkansen. The bullet trains are known for the extremely punctual service, comfortable carriages and the lack of noise as you travel at speeds of up to 300 kilometres per hour. Our destination is Kanazawa, until 150 years ago the 4th largest city in Japan. The city has shunned mass industrialisation and retains the charm of winding back streets, delicate tea shops and the beautiful autumn maples and spring cherry blossoms of Kenrokuen Gardens. Once ruled by the Maeda Clan, one of the most powerful Samurai families in Japan, the city has several traditional samurai districts which we will explore. Tonight we are accommodated in a traditional inn, known as a ryokan, where we sleep on comfortable, folding futon mattresses laid on top of woven tatami mats. Rooms are twin share and because most ryokans are very small it is not possible to offer a single room. Bathrooms are usually shared as rooms are not typically en suite. During our stay, we learn about local etiquette, such as when to take off our shoes and the pleasures of taking a Japanese bath, all of which helps enhance our stay in this traditional establishment.



Accommodation: Sumiyoshiya Ryokan (or similar)



Standard Ryokan



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Take the train to Kyoto

After breakfast we make our way back to the train station for the journey to Kyoto. Kyoto is regarded as Japan's loveliest city, with more than 2000 temples and shrines, many set in perfectly manicured landscaped gardens. We base ourselves in Kyoto for the next four nights to allow ample opportunity to explore the highlights. We begin by visiting the famous Golden Pavilion. The temple is a three storey building with the top two tiers covered in gold leaf. Set in a lake the building appears to float on the water and the reflections, coupled with the background of forest make it worthy of its place on many Japanese postcards. There is also time to stroll along Kyoto's charming streets and tree-lined canal, simply soaking up its unique atmosphere.



Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 5 - Explore Kyoto's temples and gardens

We spend today visiting some of the cities many temples. We start with the Ryonji Temple with its beautiful zen gardens and famous rock garden. The exact history of the gardens is unknown but it is thought the temple was converted from an aristocrats villa in 1450. Whilst in the gardens try testing out the theory that at least one of the rocks is hidden from every vantage point. We also plan to visit Nijo Castle. Built in 1603 as a Shogun palace, it is a great example of the sumptuous setting in which the Shogun would have held audiences with his samurai warriors.



Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Visit Hiroshima and Miyajima

An early morning train takes us to Hiroshima, where we will spend the morning exploring this thought-provoking city in our own time. Completely destroyed on 6th August 1945, when it was the target of the first atomic bomb to be used in wartime, Hiroshima has literally risen from the ashes, and is now a thriving, friendly city. We visit the Peace Memorial Park and the well-presented museum on the site of the 1945 A-bomb hypocentre. Whilst serving as poignant reminders of the nuclear holocaust, their overwhelming message is of hope that such horrors will never reoccur. Travel around the city is easy, thanks to the provision of colourful street trams, brought in from all over Japan after the war. Just off the coast of Hiroshima is the tiny island of Miyajima. The relaxed feel of this island is enhanced by the deer that roam freely through the streets. As we arrive on the ferry we can take in the famous view of the floating torii gates. Considered to be one of the most beautiful sights in Japan, these red gates appear to float on the water with the hills of the island forming a spectacular backdrop. We take time to explore some of the islands many shrines before we take the ferry back to the mainland.



Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Discover Himeji's ancient castle

Today we travel to the city of Himeji in Hyogo Prefecture. The city is known for its original castle. Known as the \ White Egret\ owing to the brilliant white walls and winged roof the castle is unlike others in the country having escaped damage by war, earthquake or fires which often destroy these traditional wooden structures. Listed as a World Heritage Site the castle complex is made up of over 80 buildings and an impressive spiral maze leading up to the entrance which deterred intruders and allowed residents to open fire if the visitors were unwelcome. Close to the castle are Kokoen Gardens where we can try green tea and wander through the relaxing bamboo groves.



Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Tour ends in Kyoto

Our tour ends after breakfast this morning.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Dinner: 3



Transport

Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

6 nights standard hotel
1 nights standard ryokan

Trip information

Country information

Japan Holidays & Tours

Climate

Japan's climate is mostly temperate, with five distinct seasons. Summer is from June to September with temperatures reaching 30°C, although it can vary from warm to very hot. After mid-July, July and August can be humid. Spring and Autumn are mild throughout Japan. Winter, October to April, is cold with snowfall. The main rainy season is June. Japan can be prone to short, tropical cyclones in August to October. October/November although cooler is a great time to see the Autumn colours.

Time difference to GMT

+9

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Buddhism, Christian and Shinto

Language

Japanese

Clothing

Rain gear is essential all year. You will need warm clothing from October through until April when temperatures drop, especially at night. December until February are particularly cold so bring extra layers if you are travelling at this time.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes, and sandals for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Your main luggage will be transferred directly from Tokyo to Kyoto therefore you will need to use your daypack to carry everything you need for the overnight stay in Kanazawa.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Country Information

Japan Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£8

Dinner price

£20

Beer price

£4

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Yen.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

It is preferable to take money in Yen or traveller's cheques.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

All post offices have international ATMs. Some other ATMs do not accept Western bank/credit cards. Your tour leader will advise you locally.

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques

It should be noted that outside of the major cities it is difficult to change traveller's cheques. Where available it takes 30-45 minutes, the best places to exchange them is at the airport on arrival.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

On this tour we spend one night in a traditional Japanese Inn, known as a Ryokan. Thick futon mattresses are laid out on woven tatami mats and the rooms are very simple. Typically ryokans do not offer en suite accommodation and therefore bathrooms will be shared. Due to the small nature of ryokans a single room cannot be offered.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Japan: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the

dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Japan Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. We recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. The use or possession of Vicks inhalers and some other common prescription and over-the-counter medicines (e.g. for allergies and sinus problems or even certain mild painkillers, such as those containing certain levels of codeine) are banned under Japan's strictly enforced anti-stimulant drugs law. Customs officials may not be sympathetic if you claim ignorance about these medicines. If in any doubt about customs procedures for such items, you should check with the nearest Japanese Embassy before visiting Japan.
