

# EXPLORE!



## Cycle Japan

13 days

Japan - Trip code CJA

## Cycle Japan

From the ancient city of Kyoto we cycle along quiet roads on the Noto Peninsula and into the highlands around the Shirakawa-go historic village, taking us firmly off the beaten track and providing us with a glimpse of old Japan. Along the way we will see one of the finest Japanese gardens in Kanazawa and enjoy varied mountain scenery and coastal paths. We end our journey travelling by bullet train to modern Tokyo.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Off the beaten track cycling** - Enjoy the landscapes, flavours and characters of rural Japan
- ★ **Kyoto** - Japan's historic capital, filled with temples and traditional tea houses
- ★ **Tokyo** - Explore the modern metropolis
- ★ **Kanazawa** - Visit the gardens of Kenrokuen, one of the most beautiful in Japan
- ★ **The Noto Peninsula** - Cycle amongst the stunning coastal landscapes of the Sea of Japan
- ★ **Hot springs** - Experience the country's famous onsens and soothe your cycling legs
- ★ **Delicious local food** - Enjoy traditional Japanese cuisine
- ★ **Shirakawa-go** - Visit World Heritage farmhouses and historic towns

#### 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.

#### CYCLING GRADE:

##### Moderate

Medium length rides suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. Mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

#### 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 - Join tour in historic Kyoto

This incredible journey begins in the old Imperial capital of Kyoto, regarded by many as the country's loveliest city. Lying at the heart of Japanese culture and influence for over 1,000 years, Kyoto lay at the centre of events that helped to shape the destiny and history of this most fascinating of cultures. One of the only major cities to survive the extensive bombing of WWII, Kyoto can boast more than 2000 temples and shrines, many set in manicured landscaped gardens, making this captivating city the cradle of all things uniquely Japanese.



**Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Kyoto sightseeing by bike. Including Ginkaku-ji and along The Philosopher's Path to the Nanzen-ji temple complex

This incredible city can boast no fewer than 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites including 13 temples, three Shinto shrines and a 17th century castle. We will pick up our bikes and set out cycling to the Heian Jingu Shrine, before taking in the scenic Philosopher's Path, Eikando Temple and the 15th Century Ginkaku-ji Temple. After lunch we will cycle south along the Kamo river to Tofukuji Temple's rock gardens and the 1001 statues of Kannon Bodhisattva (the goddess of mercy) located at the Sanjusangendo temple on the eastern edge of the city. This evening is free. Please note that there is no vehicle support for today's ride and we will be using simple local style bikes. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 17 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 60 metres).



**Accommodation: Ibis Styles Kyoto Station** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Morning train to Kanazawa. Bike tour of Kenroku-en Garden and the old teahouse district

This morning we travel by train (2hrs+) to Kanazawa, a city that once rivalled Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo) in cultural importance. Once home to the powerful Maeda Clan, today it serves as the capital of the Ishikawa Prefecture and boasts the stunning setting of the Kenrokuen Gardens, considered to be one of Japan's most beautiful landscape gardens. This afternoon we will pick up our bikes and meet our guide, before heading off to visit the gardens. Taking nearly two centuries to complete and translating from their original Japanese as the 'Garden of the Six Sublimities', Kenrouken was begun by the Maedas in 1632 and covers over 11 hectares of land on the outskirts of Kanazawa Castle. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 8 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 60 metres), no support vehicle today.



**Accommodation: Garden Hotel Kanazawa** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Cycling around the beautiful Noto Peninsula including the Chirihama Beach Road

Our main bags will be sent on to Wakura Onsen today as, over the next four days we make do with smaller bags as we cycle north, following the coast on to the Noto Peninsula. Our destination today is Chirihama Beach in Hakui, lying to the north of Kahoku. The eight kilometre beach is famous for its unique tightly compacted sand which, at a quarter of the size of normal sand, makes it firm enough to actually drive on. Tonight we stay for the first time in typical Japanese style accommodation, furnished in the traditional way with futon mattresses on tatami-mat floors. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 60 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 220 metres).



**Accommodation: Noto Royal Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 5 - Cycle the coastal road to Wajima, stopping off at the Sojijiso-in temple

Keeping the Sea of Japan on our left we continue following the coast north today, heading for the city of Wajima in the northern half of the Noto Peninsula. One of the most scenic coastal landscapes in Japan, the Noto Peninsula extends into the Sea of Japan for some 100 kilometres, providing us with a beautifully secluded journey north. We travel by way of the Ganmon National Park and stop off to visit the Sojiji Temple and Gardens, once one of the most important Zen Buddhist temples in Japan. Founded in 1321, it was the head temple of the Soto sect, before a great fire in 1898 saw its functions transferred to a sister temple in Yokohama. Our

total cycling distance today is approximately 66 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 680 metres).



**Accommodation: Hotel Route Inn Wajima** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Explore Wajima Market. Continue along the stunning coastal road to Suzu

This morning we pay a visit to Wajima's famous Morning Market, one of the city's most famous attractions. Believed to date back over 1,000 years, it brings together vendors selling all manner of goods, from fresh fish and produce, to handicrafts and lacquerware, Wajima's most celebrated export. Renowned throughout Japan, Wajima lacquerware is famed for its durability, with each piece requiring the skills of several craftsmen and dozens of processes. Following our visit we then continue on our journey, heading towards the northeastern tip of the peninsula and the waters of Iida Bay. Tonight we sleep in a traditional Japanese ryokan guesthouse. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 47 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 690 metres).



**Accommodation: Rokko Ryokan** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 7 - Cycle to Noto Ushitsu as we head down the eastern side of the peninsula

We complete our ride around the Noto Peninsula today as we follow its eastern edge towards the town of Noto Ushitsu. The very remoteness of this landscape has been one of its most enduring features for centuries and much of this stunning peninsula has been granted a Quasi-National Park status. Tonight we sleep in a traditional Japanese ryokan guesthouse. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 49 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 690 metres).



**Accommodation: Noto Ushitsu-so** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 8 - Cycle to Wakura Onsen where ancient, healing hot baths await our arrival

The waters of Nanao Bay and the famous hot springs of Wakura Onsen beckon today. One of the oldest resort towns in Japan, legend has it that these hot springs were discovered over 1,200 years ago, when a local fisherman found a white heron curing its wounds in the steaming waters. Today its healing waters are said to cure everything from muscle aches and stiff joints, to chronic skin disease and frail children! The town is also famed for its seafood, with a number of its traditional inns serving up a mouthwatering choice of oysters, crabs, deep-water shrimps and abalones. The perfect cure for body and soul after our four days of cycling. Tonight we sleep in a traditional Japanese ryokan guesthouse. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 71

kilometres (total accumulated ascent 870 metres).



**Accommodation: Kimpa-so** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 9 - We begin our journey inland as we head up to Shokawa Onsen

This morning our journey turns inland as we leave Ishikawa Prefecture for neighbouring Toyama. As before, our large bags go on ahead and we will be using small bags for the next two nights, carried with us in our support vehicle. Our ride today includes the biggest hill of our entire trip, but also takes in a rural landscape of rice paddies and mountain peaks, finishing at the mountain village of Shogawa Onsen. 'Onsens' are dotted all across rural Japan, hot springs that were traditionally used as public bathing places, they make the most of Japan's active volcanic landscapes. There is a distinct etiquette to bathing, with cleanliness and social niceties being observed by participants, whilst rowdiness and tattoos are particularly frowned upon (tattoos in Japan have long been associated with criminal Yakuza gangs). Tonight we sleep in traditional ryokan accommodation with private en-suite facilities. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 71 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 860 metres).



**Accommodation: Ryokan Kawakin** (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 10 - Our journey concludes at beautiful Shirakawa-go, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses

Today we head into the remote countryside of the Shogawa River Valley, where we will find a number of beautifully preserved gassho-zukuri farmhouses. With their steep thatched roofs, constructed to resemble the praying hands of Buddhist monks, some of these houses are over 250 years old. Developed over many generations and designed to withstand the heavy falls of snow that regularly envelope the region in winter, these roofs are constructed without nails and the large attics were traditionally used to cultivate silkworms. We plan to visit one of the traditional farmhouses. Our final destination today is the historic village of Shirakawa-go which, along with neighbouring Gokayama, has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 57 kilometres (total accumulated ascent 820 metres).



**Accommodation: Toyota Shirakawa Go Eco Institute** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 11 - Shinkansen bullet train to Tokyo

Leaving Shirakawa-go and our bikes behind we travel first by bus (1hr30) back to Kanazawa. It is from here that we take the iconic Shinkansen bullet train (2hrs30) to Japan's capital city, Tokyo. Tokyo is the most populous metropolitan area in the world, home to

more than thirteen million people including the Japanese imperial family. The city holds a lot of history as well as modern shopping centres and the neon illuminated signs it's famous for. Half of the city was rebuilt after being destroyed in the war but there are still many historic temples and gardens that remain and await exploration. On arrival to Tokyo we have the chance to explore this fascinating city. No cycling today.



**Accommodation: Asakusa Via Inn (was Blue Wave Inn)** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Enjoy Tokyo from our base in the historic Asakusa district a stone's throw from Sensoji temple

Today you is left free for you to explore, wander and shop at leisure or take an optional guided tour of Tokyo. A typical itinerary would be to visit the Asakusa Sensoji-temple followed by a river cruise to the the Hama-rikyu gardens, Meiji shrine and finally the Shinjuku Government Building for great views over Tokyo. No cycling today.



**Accommodation: Asakusa Via Inn (was Blue Wave Inn)** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Tour ends Tokyo

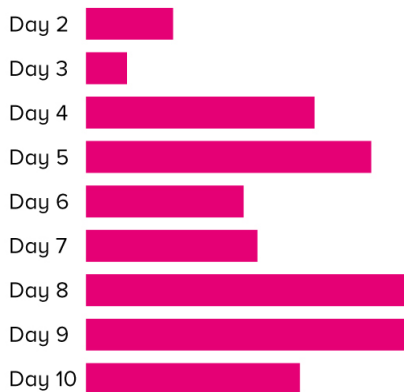
The tour ends this morning after breakfast in Tokyo.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

# Cycling information

## DAILY DISTANCE



### General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 446 km over nine days (an average of 50 km per day). We travel mainly on quiet country roads and along some cycle paths (10%). The terrain is relatively flat on the Noto Peninsula and becomes hillier on the inland section to Shirakawa-go. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour, except for the city bike tours in Kanazawa and Kyoto. We have graded the route as moderate.

### Bike included

24 gear Specialized Sirrus or Vita hybrid bikes. Simple local bike in Kyoto.

### Bike information

Your included bike is a 24 gear Specialized Sirrus or Vita hybrid bike and will be the correct frame size for your height. A simple local style bike is provided in Kyoto. A water bottle holder is included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour except on days 2 and 3. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

### Cycling grade

Moderate

## Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 12  
Dinner: 7



## Transport

Bus  
Bicycle  
Train



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle  
guide  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

2 nights standard guesthouse  
3 nights simple guesthouse  
7 nights standard hotel

# 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

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Kyoto - Boat trip on Hozu River GBP 30 Takaoka - Walking tour to Takaoka Buddha statue & Zuiryoji temple (500 Yen entrance fee)  
Tokyo - City tour including Asakusa Sensoji-temple, River cruise, Hama-rikyu gardens, Meiji shrine and Shinjuku Government Building (view of Tokyo) GBP 15

### Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. General: Pack essentially for hot or mild weather depending on the time of the year. Please note that each accommodation provides yukatas (pyjamas), soap, shampoo, conditioner, disposable razors, towels and tooth brushes.



## Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

## Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack (big enough to carry what you need for a few days) and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. There are a few days on the tour when you will not have your main luggage so will need to pack the day bag with your essentials. For the nights where you are separated from your main piece of luggage please note that each accommodation provides clients with yukatas (pyjamas), soap, shampoo, conditioner, disposable razors, towels and tooth brushes. In fact these amenities are provided for all nights on the tour in each accommodation.

## Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. It is a legal requirement in Japan to wear a helmet that meets current safety criteria. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. There is no vehicle support on days 2 and 3 so you would need to cycle with your rucksack. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

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

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow £5 per person

## 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

Bus, Bicycle, 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.

Standard - Our 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. Simple - In the more rural and traditional places we stay in Japanese style accommodation (3 nights simple, 2 night standard) where you will be in twin share rooms with traditional tatami-mat (woven soft 'igusa' straw) flooring and sleeping on futons. Generally the rooms are simply decorated with a low 'kotatsu' table to sit around, a scroll or picture in an alcove and a Japanese tea set. The two futons are just brought out at night. Shoes are taken off in the entrance way to the room. We refer to these as Japanese guesthouses. The simple grade accommodation has shared toilets and traditional same sex communal baths and showers and one has a communal bath that people take turns using. The standard grade accommodation has a private bath or shower attached to each guest room.

## 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. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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](http://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.

