

EXPLORE!

Book with confidence



Shogun Trail

JAPAN - TRIP CODE JS

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Explore Tokyo's neon-lit streets, discover Kyoto's tranquil temples and visit the site of the world's first atomic attack in Hiroshima. Travel away from the tourist trail to uncover the country's rural charm with a stay in a traditional ryokan on the beautiful island of Hirado.

- **Tokyo** - Explore the city's lively neon-lit streets and visit Hakone National Park for a spectacular view of Mount Fuji
- **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** - Reflect at the sites of the world's first atomic bomb attacks
- **Tea with a geisha** - Enjoy Japanese tea with a geisha and learn about her art and her life



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 11
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 3

TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader

TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Train

ACCOMMODATION
2 nights simple
guesthouse
8 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
ryokan

TRIP PACE:
Moderate

GROUP SIZE:
10 - 16

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour in Tokyo

Arrive in Tokyo, the ultra-modern capital of Japan.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 6.30pm for the welcome meeting. After this we have dinner included at a nearby local restaurant where you will have the chance to sample various types of 'izakaya' style Japanese cuisine. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Tokyo at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Haneda Airport (HND) or Narita Airport (NRT). The city centre is around an hour away from Haneda Airport and an hour and a half from Narita. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, we recommend taking the train one stop or walking along the Sumida River and then crossing over to see the Edo Tokyo Museum (it takes approximately 20 minutes to get here). This fascinating architectural structure gives a great history of Japan's capital and it is next to the sumo stadium so there is the chance to spot a sumo wrestler in the area. Also nearby is the Hokusai Museum which displays woodblock prints of Japan's most famous artist. Alternatively you can wander around the Asakusa area and explore the back streets. You will find sword shops, street food, goldfish scooping, rickshaws and plenty more just a few minutes' walk from the hotel.



ACCOMMODATION:
Asakusa Via Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: DINNER

DAY 2 - Walking tour through Tokyo's shrines and 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, Senso-ji, in 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. After arriving in the heart of the city near Hamarikyu Gardens, you may later wish to visit the Meiji shrine and Shinjuku area, where the latest electronic gadgets dazzle from glowing shop-fronts.



ACCOMMODATION:
Asakusa Via Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Boat ride on Lake Ashi; transfer to Hakone

Today, we spend the day exploring the Hakone National Park - home to the towering Mount Fuji. Although distances are short, we use a variety of forms of transport including bus, funicular rail and cable car as we make our way initially to the hot, bubbling sulphur springs at Owakudani. From here, on a clear day, there are magnificent views of the snow-capped mountain that is so synonymous with Japan. Whilst at the springs, you may wish to join the locals in eating an egg boiled in the sulphur pools - just one is reputed to increase life expectancy by seven years!

Our next stop is Lake Ashi, a magnificent lake created from the eruption of the Hakone Volcano over 3000 years ago. A short boat ride takes us to Moto Hakone where you may choose to relax in one of the lakeside restaurants.

In Hakone, we are accommodated in a traditional inn, known as a ryokan, where we sleep on comfortable, folding futon mattresses. 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:
Fuji Hakone Guest House (or similar)



Grade: Simple Ryokan



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Bullet train to Kyoto; explore the Geisha district

Leaving the mountains behind us, we take the world-famous 'Bullet Train', or Shinkansen, to Kyoto - the cradle of all things uniquely Japanese. This imperial capital was at the heart of events that shaped Japan's destiny for more than 1000 years. As the only major Japanese city to remain unscathed by World War II bombings, signs of the past are in its grand temples and palaces, and also in the many quaint shops selling traditional wares. This afternoon, we head to the famous geisha district of Gion. Here, we hope to catch a glimpse of these enigmatic entertainers as they scuttle to work in the teahouses or high-class restaurants, and we'll meet with one for tea.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Elcient Kyoto (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Explore Kyoto's temples and Zen gardens

Kyoto is regarded as Japan's loveliest city, with more than 2000 temples and shrines, many set in manicured landscaped gardens. We start with the Ryoan-ji Temple with its beautiful Zen gardens and famous rock garden. The exact history of the gardens is uncertain but the temple was converted from an

aristocrat's 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 then explore 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 canals, simply soaking up its unique atmosphere and your Explore Leader will take you to some of their own favourite sites while exploring Japan's former capital.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Elcient Kyoto (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Continue to explore traditional Kyoto

Today we continue our exploration of Kyoto. We will start with a visit to 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. The grounds and gates are impressive but the real highlights are the nightingale floors and the extensive gardens. It is also possible to take an optional trip to nearby Nara, a journey of 45 minutes each way by train. Nara is one of Japan's greenest cities and is home to the Todai-ji Temple, until very recently the world's largest wooden building, it is also home to a giant bronze Buddha statue. All of Nara's highlights can be explored by foot so it makes for an easy day's exploration.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Elcient Kyoto (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 7 - Reflect at Hiroshima Peace Park; train to Nagasaki

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.

You may choose to 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 over-whelming 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.

This afternoon, we regroup to take the train to Nagasaki, where we will spend the next two nights. This is a city with an eventful history and was, of course, the target of the second atomic bomb attack on Japan. In a cruel twist of fate, the city bore the unimaginable brunt of a last-minute change of plan, when the preferred target of Kokura was obscured by cloud.



ACCOMMODATION:

S-Peria Hotel Nagasaki (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Take a walk though Dejima, Nagasaki's Dutch quarter

This morning we are given a tour of Nagasaki, which, for long periods in its history, has served as Japan's main contact with the outside world. In the 16th century, the city became established as the main trade point with the Portuguese. As well as providing wealth from trade, the Portuguese introduced Christianity. After almost a century of turmoil, the religion was banned, foreign traders were expelled, and Japan closed its doors to the West.

The one exception was the artificial island in Nagasaki harbour, Dejima. This small, closely guarded enclave was the site of the Dutch Trading Mission, which remained Japan's only contact with the outside world for almost 200 years. During our visit here, we can see that some of the original features remain, as well as some excellent reconstructions of the 18th century buildings. Continuing our tour in the Glover Gardens, we will see fine foreign residences of the Meiji period and enjoy impressive views over Nagasaki Harbour, perhaps the most scenic harbour view in Japan.

The afternoon has been left free to explore this historic city in your own time.



ACCOMMODATION:
S-Peria Hotel Nagasaki (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Drive through scenic tea plantations and ferry ride to Hirado Island

This morning we travel light, sending our main luggage on to our final destination of Fukuoka and packing our rucksacks for our stay on the island of Hirado. Our route takes us along a scenic road through tea plantations. We'll stop at a picturesque terraced area and walk through the fields to the tea farmer's house. There'll be an opportunity to sample some of the brew including green 'Sencha' and roasted 'Hojicha' teas before enjoying a traditional style lunch with the local tea farmers. After lunch we continue our journey to the seaside city of Sasebo. Here we board our ferry to the charming harbour quayside in Hirado. Our accommodation for tonight is a simple hotel with comfortable futon beds and the chance to take another hot spring bath.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hirado Wakigawa Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Full day to explore Hirado and Ikitsuki Islands

Today, we will explore the pristine and unspoiled islands of Hirado and Ikitsuki, connected by an impressive 400 metre-long bridge which happens to be the longest truss bridge in the world. Accompanied by a local expert on a day-long minibus tour, we will discover rural Japan and take in the remote countryside of the 'Hidden Christians'. Along the islands' shores, fishing remains one of the main occupations, but we also have the opportunity to learn about traditional industries along the way. We plan to visit a museum dedicated to the whaling industry, which played a vital role in the history of this region. On our journey, we will gain views of the islands' spectacular coastlines and towering cliffs.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hirado Wakigawa Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Sail among the '99 Islands' then travel to Fukuoka

This morning will be spent soaking up the charms of Hirado, a city which has prospered as a castle town for almost 500 years. Its excellent port enabled it to become the central stage for trade with China, Holland and Portugal from the 17th century. Our walking tour will offer fascinating insights into the way things were here in the early 1600s. We will discover the wonderful Matsura museum, housed in the former residence of the Matsura family who ruled the area from the 13th Century. We will also take in the church commemorating Saint Francis Xavier who preached here in the 1500s; the sites of the old trading houses and the foreigners' cemetery. Later we will enjoy spectacular views on a relaxing cruise through the fabled 'Ninety Nine Islands'. In actual fact, 170 islands, mostly uninhabited, lie alongside the indented saw-toothed coastline.

This afternoon, we travel to our accommodation near the airport in Fukuoka, for our final afternoon.



ACCOMMODATION:
Route Inn Hakata Eki-mae (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Tour ends in Fukuoka

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Fukuoka.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Fukuoka at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel, while you head for some last minute shopping or sightseeing. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you

need to depart from Fukuoka Airport (FUK) which is around 20 minutes away.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Japan

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. For trips that visit the Snow Monkeys at Jigokudani Onsen, you're very likely to see them all year around, aside from in October/November when there is enough food in the forest to prevent them coming down to the baths. You may still see some at this time but not in the numbers found during the rest of the year.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+9	2 Pin Flat	Buddhism, Christian and Shinto	Japanese

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Tokyo - trip to Kamakura £20.00.

Kyoto - Boat trip on Hozu River £30.00. Train to Nara - £10.

Nagasaki - Sunset on Mt. Inasa £15

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

You should take one main piece of baggage and a daypack. Your main luggage won't always accompany you, being forwarded from Tokyo to Kyoto, from Kyoto to Nagasaki (arriving in Nagasaki the day after you) and then from Nagasaki to the final nightstop at Fukuoka. Your daypack should therefore have sufficient space for overnights in Hakone and Nagasaki and a 2 night stay on Hirado. We recommend a compact suitcase with wheels or good quality rucksack.

Japan's rail network has a policy that requires passengers with oversized baggage to reserve a specific seat in an oversized baggage area. This relates to baggage with overall dimensions of over 160cm (taken by adding the height+width+depth measurements). These overall dimensions are around the same for which oversized baggage fees are charged on international airlines, so it's unlikely that you will be bringing a suitcase of this size. However, it is worth checking the dimensions and then repacking with a smaller case if necessary. Due to the complexities of booking these seats, if you arrive with an oversized bag, our team in Japan will ship the luggage from one place to the next from the beginning to the end of the tour, at an additional cost.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle to save on purchase of plastic bottles and a small torch. Hairdryers are provided at all the hotels.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Japan

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£15-20	£4	£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency Recommended Currency For Exchange

Yen. 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, Boat, Train

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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 be able to apply 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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

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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS