

EXPLORE!

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Tokyo to Osaka by Rail - Private Tour

JAPAN - TRIP CODE PTQJS

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Carefully designed for travellers who love their independence, this trip is a real adventure through the centre of Japan, from super-modern Tokyo to scenes that remain unchanged from the times of the Shogun and the Samurai. With the reassurance that you'll be staying in well-located accommodation, and with clear and concise information about which train to take and how to navigate the Japanese metro, your experience will be one of complete freedom punctuated with expert guiding at Hiroshima, Tokyo and Kyoto. You'll discover Japan's excellent rail network, meet snow monkeys and tame deer, stay in a family-run ryokan, and experience the modern and the ancient in this invigorating country.

- **Tokyo** - Explore modern and ancient Tokyo, and take the chance to visit nearby Mount Fuji
- **Kyoto** - Experience the beating heart of traditional Japan with temples, Zen gardens and geishas

- **Kanazawa** - Visit the Samurai district and discover the secrets of the Ninja Temple

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 13 Dinner: 1 | TRIP STAFF Local Guide(s) | TRANSPORT Boat Car Train | ACCOMMODATION 12 nights comfortable hotel 1 nights premium ryokan | TRIP PACE: Moderate |

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Trip begins in Tokyo

Arrive in Tokyo, the ultra-modern capital of Japan today, and catch an airport shuttle bus from either Haneda Airport (HND) or Narita Airport (NRT) depending on your flight details. You can arrive into Tokyo at any time, and for those of you booking your own flights, you will need to send us your flight details no later than three weeks prior to departure in order for us to send you your voucher for the airport shuttle bus. Further information on catching the shuttle will be in your final documentation.

If your flight arrives early in the day, we recommend taking the train to Ryogoku Station to see the Edo Tokyo Museum (the museum is just outside the station, look for the massive building on stilts). This fascinating architectural structure gives a great insight in to the 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 explore the area around Asakusa station. Aside from Senso-ji Temple, it is a joy to wander around the back streets where you will find sword shops, street food, traditional goldfish scooping stalls and rickshaws.



ACCOMMODATION:
Asakusa Via Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Experience the spectacular Fire Ceremony and discover Tokyo's temples and frenetic city streets

You will have the benefit of local guides at three distinct places along this private journey, and your first day in Tokyo is one of them. Meeting you at the hotel, you'll head out for a morning exploration both on foot and using the super-efficient metro system along with the locals.

Beginning in dramatic fashion, attend the morning fire service at Fudo-do Temple. Here the esoteric Shingon sect perform a ceremony involving leaping flames and the chanting of sacred texts, accompanied by the deafening beat of huge taiko drums. The result is a truly atmospheric experience and an authentic insight into Japanese Buddhist culture (however, please note that this doesn't happen during Japanese public holidays). Next, discover the famed Senso-ji at Asakusa which deserves to be high on any explorer's list. The oldest temple in the city, it was originally built around a golden image of the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion and Mercy, and is entered through the imposing Thunder Gate, flanked on either side by massive fierce statues of the gods of wind and rain.

End the morning at Tokyo's Akihabara electronic district where brightly coloured shop-fronts flashing with neon invite you to join in a frenzy of electronic entertainment, or to relax in quirky themed cafes where you can be served by vampires, butlers, maids or fantasy characters!

After lunch you have the afternoon free to seek out other areas of this fascinating city such as the trendy back streets of Harajuku, the busiest crossing in the world at Shibuya, or the skyscraper district of Shinjuku and its incredible robot restaurant.



ACCOMMODATION:
Asakusa Via Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Explore Tokyo with the option to visit Hakone National Park for views of Mount Fuji

Today you are free to seek out the parts of Tokyo that you'd most like to experience, and there are plenty of exciting options to choose from in and around the city.

Visiting beautiful Hakone National Park is a great way to spend the day, discovering the park's numerous hot springs, lakes, woodlands, and stunning views of towering Mount Fuji dominating the horizon. You can join the locals by eating an egg boiled in Owakudani hot sulphur pools, reputed to increase life expectancy by 7 years! The park is easy to get to and takes just over two hours by train.

Alternatively you can travel north to Nikko, again around two hours by train, and discover the park's great temples hidden among forests of giant cedar trees. Japan's most lavishly decorated shrine, Toshogu, is located here and is well worth a visit. The park's landscape of lakes, waterfalls and hot springs is inhabited by wild monkeys and deer, and has a number of easy-to-follow hiking paths through the delightful scenery.

The beachside town of Kamakura is just over an hour's train ride away from Tokyo. One of Japan's ancient capitals, there are many temples and shrines, and a massive bronze 'Great Buddha' statue which is almost 800 years old. The statue has outlived several buildings that were erected to house it and now stands out in the open with a serene gaze seemingly appraising the surrounding countryside. The town also has several long sandy beaches which are very popular with Tokyoites taking a day away from the city.

If you prefer to spend the day in Tokyo there is plenty to keep you occupied: The Tokyo Skytree offers views over the whole city, a cruise along the Sumida River or a walk through Hamarikyu Gardens provides respite from the frenetic pace, and the busy streets have plenty to see and do, discovering any number of quirky restaurants, shops and bars.

Whatever you decide to do today, the finer details of where to go, what to do and how to get around will be covered in an information pack that you will receive before you travel. Trains in Japan are convenient and incredibly easy to use, while the population is very welcoming, kind and helpful to travellers. The perfect combination for some self-guided exploration!



ACCOMMODATION:
Asakusa Via Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Travel by train to Matsumoto and discover the impressive Crow Castle

You'll have an IC transport card given to you, which works throughout Japan on intercity transport networks, along with train tickets for your travel to Matsumoto. Catch the metro to the train station and travel just under three hours from Tokyo to the pretty town of Matsumoto, flanked on each side by the Japanese Alps. Take the afternoon free to wander at your leisure. The town's 500 year-old castle is Japan's oldest, and worth a visit. Known as 'Crow Castle' due to its black, sombre appearance, it retains its original wooden interior which offers a very authentic atmosphere throughout its hallways and rooms. The design is fascinating, with a moon viewing pavilion, a hidden floor for the Samurai and various booby traps to aid its defence.

You may also wish to pay a visit to the nearby Ukiyo-e woodblock printing museum. Typically representing famous geisha, sumo wrestlers and kabuki dance-drama actors, the art form means 'paintings of the floating world' referring to the subjects' detachment from ordinary life.



ACCOMMODATION:
Alpico Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Meet the snow monkeys of Jigokudani

Your one week rail pass starts today, with the express train to Nagano, home to Japan's famous snow monkeys at Jigokudani Onsen. Here the indigenous macaques descend from the hills to bathe and play in the hot springs, a unique behaviour not found anywhere else in the world. Despite their wintry moniker, the monkeys can be observed in and around the pool throughout the year. Take the bus from the train station and walk up to the spring via a 45 minute pretty forest trail.

Tickets cannot be booked in advance here, so you'll pay approximately £20 on the day. As always, full instructions for getting around will be given to you in your pre-travel information pack.



ACCOMMODATION:
Nagano Tokyu REI Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Explore the samurai district of Kanazawa

Jump on the bullet train (your first experience of Japan's iconic high-speed train!) to Kanazawa, a city that rivalled Kyoto and Tokyo in the 17th and 18th centuries when it was home to the powerful Maeda samurai clan. There is a lot to do and see in Kanazawa, and the rest of the day is free for you to explore as you like. Wander around the atmospheric samurai district with its narrow lanes and earthen walls, seeing how the legendary warrior class lived, or discover the fabulous Kenrokuen Gardens, considered to be one of the most beautiful landscape gardens in Japan. The name means the 'Garden of the Six Sublimities' and was begun by the Maeda samurai clan in 1632, taking nearly 200 years to complete.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Econo Kanazawa Ekimae (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Try sushi at the Omichi Fish Market or discover the 'Ninja Temple'

Today is a free day to make the most of Kanazawa. As the town was not targeted during World War II, much of Kanazawa consists of old buildings and gives a sense of what Japan was like in the 19th century. There is plenty to do and see, and a good option is to spend some time wandering around the colourful stalls at the town's Omicho market, where fresh fish and crab are brought daily from the Sea of Japan along with vegetables from the surrounding countryside. A great dish to try here, particular to the region, is chirashi-zushi, which consists of pieces of sushi piled on the top of rice and often garnished with shredded egg. You can also visit a 'chaya', or teahouse in the the Higashi Chaya or Kazuemachi Chaya areas. While Kanazawa's surviving geisha establishments remain off limits to tourists, a number of elegant tea houses are open to the public - sadly without the presence of a geisha though! Another highlight is the Myoryuji Temple, commonly known as the 'Ninja Temple' due to its ingenious defensive devices which include secret rooms, hidden tunnels, traps, and a labyrinth of corridors and staircases. Advance booking is required for this (one day in advance is fine), which is easily done at the tourist information office located in Kanazawa station.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Econo Kanazawa Ekimae (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



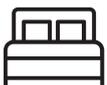
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Try sake in the old town of Takayama and stay in a family-run ryokan

This morning, take two local trains to Takayama, a city that retains an authentic, traditional feel like few others in Japan. During feudal times the city was a source of highly-skilled carpenters and therefore controlled directly by the shogun, leading to a thriving and prosperous trading community. The narrow streets of the Sanmachi Suji district are lined with dark wooden merchants' houses, many of which are 300 to 400 years old. There are several traditional sake distilleries in the old town and we highly recommend trying some of the city's famous brew, considered to be among the best in Japan due to the region's pure mountain water and cold winter months.

On the outskirts of the town is the fascinating Hida No Sato thatched roof village. This open air museum is made of original houses from the Edo period (1603 to 1867), and if you choose to visit you will gain an insight into the rural life of the region during this period. Alternatively you can spend the day exploring more of the town.

This evening is spent a ryokan, a type of accommodation that offers a very traditional Japanese experience, sleeping in twin rooms with tatami mats, futon beds and ensuite bathroom facilities. This is one of the most beautiful and historic ryokans in the city, with its own traditional 'onsen', or hot spring baths, and massages available. This evening, we have arranged for a traditional 'kaiseki' dinner to be served at your ryokan. The food focuses on seasonal specialities and is the pinnacle of Japanese cuisine. We recommend that you have a dip in the baths and then enjoy dinner in your 'yukata' (light cotton kimono provided to you at the ryokan).



ACCOMMODATION:

Tanabe Ryokan (or similar)

Grade: Premium Ryokan



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 9 - Travel by train to Hiroshima and experience the poignant Peace Park and Peace Museum

Travel to Hiroshima via two wonderful train journeys. The first is a picturesque route that follows an icy blue Hida River past shrines, bamboo groves and traditional fishermen before arriving in Nagoya. Here, change to the famous Shinkansen bullet train, covering the 400 kms to Hiroshima in around two and a half hours, travelling at speeds of up to 320 kmh and arriving early afternoon.

Largely 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 highly recommend visiting the moving Peace Memorial Park and museum on the site of the 1945 A-bomb hypocentre. Whilst serving as poignant reminders of the nuclear holocaust, their over-whelming message that such horrors should never occur again.

In the evening, try an okonomiyaki meal, a type of savoury pancake which is stuffed and cooked on a hot plate in front of the diner. The dish is particularly famous in Hiroshima where a local variation sees the ingredients layered rather than mixed.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel S-Plus Hiroshima Peace Park (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Take the ferry to Miyajima Island, meet the tame deer and see the floating torii gate

You'll have a local guide today taking you across to Miyajima, just off the coast of Hiroshima, by a small ferry. This tiny island has a very relaxed feel which is enhanced by the deer that roam freely through the streets. As you arrive you'll have a great view of the floating torii gate. Considered to be one of the most beautiful sights in Japan, the red gate appears to float on the water at high tide with the hills of the island forming a spectacular backdrop.

If you are keen, there is a 1.5 to 2 hour hike to the top of Mt. Misen for views out across the Inland Sea and a chance of seeing the monkeys that live on the mountain. Otherwise, a cable car will whisk you to the top. The name of the island translates as 'shrine island' and you will visit one of the most important, the Buddhist Daisho-in Temple where you can climb the steps to the temple and spin the prayer wheels,

believed to bestow the same blessing as actually reading the texts. There is also the opportunity to take in the 16th century Shinto Itsukushima Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is built over the sea and has a stage where key events in Shinto mythology are enacted. After exploring the island, take the ferry back to Hiroshima.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel S-Plus Hiroshima Peace Park (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

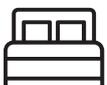


MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Take the bullet train to Kyoto and explore Nijo Castle

Make your way back to the train station for the journey by bullet train to Kyoto, which takes around two hours. The imperial capital for more than 1000 years has more than 2000 temples and shrines, many set in perfectly manicured landscaped, tranquil gardens.

This afternoon we recommend 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 extensive gardens and gates are impressive, but the real ingenuity of the castle are the nightingale floors, so called because they are designed to make a chirping noise when walked upon, thus making it impossible to sneak up on the castle's inhabitants.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Elcient Kyoto (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

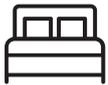
DAY 12 - Explore the Zen gardens, temples and geisha district of Kyoto

You'll have a local guide today for a full day in Kyoto, and there is so much to see. We've left the day flexible so that the guide can tailor the day around your interests. A good place to start is with an early morning visit to Fushimi Inari Shrine, beating the crowds to walk the path through the thousands of red torii gates that snake up the hillside, followed by a walk along the Philosopher's Path, taking in the Silver Pavillion, and the Eikando and Nanzenji temples.

You could try your hand at a tea ceremony, go searching for geisha and enjoy fantastic food in Gion. Alternatively, if you're really into Japanese food you may wish to take lunch at Nishiki Food Market where you can see, and try, an array of exotic and delicious foods such as octopus stuffed with quail eggs, green tea popcorn, cooked eel and matcha tea ice cream

There is also the possibility to get out of the city to Arashiyama, walk along the Oi River, visit the UNESCO World Heritage designated Zen Tenryuji Temple famous for its Zen garden and nearby bamboo groves, and finish the day with a short hike up to a mountainside Monkey Park to see wild monkeys.

Whatever you wish to do, you'll have an expert local guide with you to pass on his knowledge about Japan's cultural heartland and ancient capital.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Elcient Kyoto (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



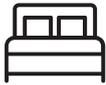
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Continue discovering Kyoto before travelling to Osaka for a final night amongst the neon lights

You have a train journey to Osaka today, which takes about 30 minutes. Kyoto is often such a highlight for customers that we recommend taking the morning to relax and explore further before travelling onwards. An early morning visit to Kiyomizu Temple (Pure Water Temple) is a great idea, especially when followed by the pleasant walk along the cobblestone streets to Kodaiji. Here you can see a perfectly groomed towering bamboo grove, a Zen rock garden, and a pair of historic tea houses.

Arrive into Osaka in the afternoon. Head to the Namba area, one of Osaka's most vibrant and interesting districts. Miles of covered arcades criss-crossed by canals and rivers open up to back streets filled with history and small shops. For those wanting something different, get to towering Osaka Castle, or the impressive Umeda Sky Building for unobstructed 360 degree views of the whole city.

During your last night out in Japan, try Osaka's most-loved snack, octopus balls.



ACCOMMODATION:
Rihga Place Higobashi (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Trip ends in Osaka

Your trip ends today, and you will be taken to the airport to meet your international flight. There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Osaka at anytime. You can fly out of either Kansai International Airport (KIX), approximately 2 hours away, or Osaka International Airport (ITM), which takes around an hour. This departure will be by private car, and we just need confirmation of your flight details no later than three weeks prior to your trip in order to arrange this for you. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at the hotel.



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.

This trip is designed with free time in several locations so that you are able to take advantage of the huge variety of things to see and do. The list below provides an idea of approximate costs of some of the most popular activities. Please note that you will not be able to do all of the activities listed, and you may choose to do something not included. For budgeting purposes it is best to assume that you are likely to want to take part in one or two activities per area. Public transport is incredibly easy to use in Japan with signs in English and, on main tourist routes, announcements in English too.

Tokyo - return train to Nikko approx. £30, entrance fee approx. £7; trains to and from Hakone approx. £30, transport and entrance fees inside the park approx. £30; trains to and from Kamakura approx. £14; Tokyo Sky Tree approx. £14; water bus from Asakusa to Hamarikyū Gardens approx. £6.50

Matsumoto - Ukiyo-e woodblock printing museum entrance fee approx. £6.50, transport to and from the museum approx. £2

Nagano - Snow Monkeys approx. £20

Kanazawa - One day bus pass to travel around the whole city approx. £4; Kenrokuen Gardens entrance fee approx. £2, entrance to Seisonkaku Villa in Kenrokuen Gardens approx. £4; Nomura Samurai House and Gardens entrance approx. £3; 21st Century Museum entrance approx. £6.50; Myoryuji 'Ninja' Temple entrance approx. £6.50 (requires advance booking that can be arranged by your Explore Leader); Shima Tea House in Geisha District entrance approx. £3, Nomura Samurai House approx. £3; Sake tasting approx. £2.50

Takayama - Hida no Sato thatched roof village approx. £7 for transport and entrance

Miyajima Island - Itsukushima Shrine, approx. £2 entrance fee, cable car to the top of Mt Misen approx.£7 one way and £12 return

Kyoto - One day bus pass to travel around the whole city approx. £4.00; Silver Pavilion approx. £3.50; Eikando approx. £4.00; Nanzenin temple at Nanzenji £3.50; Tenryuji - £3.50; Return train to Arashiyama approx. £4; Fushimi Inari Shrine entrance free.

Osaka - Entrance to Castle approx. £4; Entrance to Umeda Sky Building Observatory approx. £6.50

Clothing

Rain gear is essential all year. In fact in Japan it is the norm to use an umbrella, which is much preferred over a wet jacket. You will need warm clothing from October through until April when temperatures drop, especially at night. From December to February the temperature is around 5 to 10 degrees in the day, and can approach freezing on some nights so bring extra layers if you are travelling at this time.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes, and sandals for relaxing. Shoes that are easy to take on and off are useful for visiting temples.

Luggage

20Kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Do remember that you are navigating trains and metros on this trip, so don't overload yourself.

It's important to mention that passengers intending to bring baggage with overall dimensions of over 160cm (taken by adding the height+width+depth measurements) will need to reserve a seat with an oversized baggage area. There is no additional cost for this seat, but availability cannot always be guaranteed. 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. You can find the full details of this policy here: <https://global.jr-central.co.jp/en/info/oversized-baggage/>

Japan also has an excellent luggage forwarding system that makes it easy for travellers to send on heavy cases when travelling by public transport. We highly advise making use of this service during this tour, regardless of the size of your bags, particularly on the following two occasions: On day 5 from Matsumoto to Kanazawa and on day 8 from Kanazawa to Hiroshima. If you choose to take advantage of this service you will just need an overnight bag for nights 5 and 8. The cost ranges from around £10 to £15 and the hotels will assist you with the paperwork involved.

Equipment

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

all the hotels.

Tipping

Local crew

For the most part there is no tipping in Japan, neither in restaurants nor in taxis.

However, tipping is customary if you have been looked after particularly well by a private guide. You may wish to give a tip. As a guideline, 2,000 yen per 8-hour day is a suitable amount, handed over in a small envelope if possible.

For spontaneous acts of kindness any small items from your home country, such as stamps, coins, photographs or postcards will be warmly received.

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

Boat, Car, Train

Accommodation notes

During this trip we stay in a range of comfortable accommodations, which are centrally-located and close to metro stations - perfect for you to get around on Japan's excellent and efficient public transport system.

In Takayama you'll have the chance to stay in a traditional Japanese Ryokan. There are many ryokans around Japan of differing standards and with different amenities, and we've purposely chosen an upgraded option with en suite facilities and a traditional Japanese bath, which will no doubt be a highlight of your trip. The rooms have traditional tatami-mat (woven soft 'igusa' straw) flooring and futons to sleep on. 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 brought out at night. Shoes are removed in the entrance way to the room.

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

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.

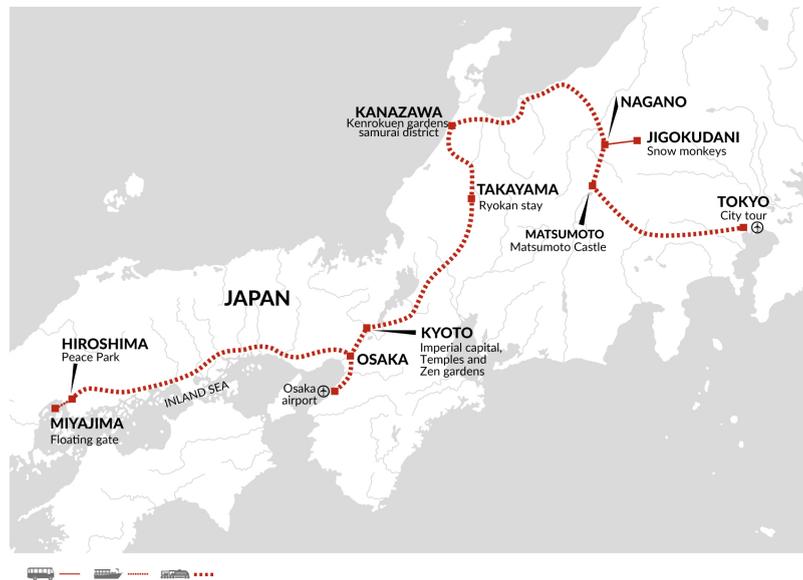
On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

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



Tour Staff

Unlike our group tours our private journeys do not have a Tour Leader. However, you are still in safe hands as we work closely with our expert local suppliers on the planning and organisation of your holiday to ensure that you have a fantastic time. This trip is very much self-guided and you'll have a full information pack sent to you prior to travel, which will include all of your train tickets, shuttle bus vouchers, maps, transport cards, local contact numbers and everything else that you will need to get around. We do advise you to read this pack carefully because we will make recommendations for train times and tell you how to validate your ticket, as well as telling you which platform to go to, our suggested day trips and all of the other information you'll need to make the most of your time in Japan. The great thing is that Japan's train system is simple, easy and very well trodden by travellers - it's by far the best way to travel. If you do need any reassurance during your trip, you have someone on hand with our 24/7 emergency contact number, and your guides in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Kyoto are also excellent, and will help to bring the destination to life.

Why book this trip

This trip covers Japan's must see highlights such as Tokyo and Kyoto, as well as other less well-known but equally exciting locations, with time built in for personal exploration. It's a hybrid of a self-guided adventure but with some private guided experiences to really get to the heart of Tokyo, Hiroshima and Kyoto's diverse highlights.

Reviews



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**