



Insider's Japan

It's a land of delicate art and bustling commerce, of rich traditions and dizzying modernity; a jumble of sights, sounds, and tastes that for visitors are truly foreign – and truly fascinating. This well-crafted tour features the highlights of Tokyo and Kyoto, engages us in local life, and takes us off the beaten path to the lovely historic cities of Takayama and Kanazawa.

With an Post-Tour Extension: Hiroshima: City of Peace

Itinerary

Created on Mar 1, 2024

Insider's Japan

Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Tokyo, Japan

DAY 2: Arrive Tokyo

Upon arrival in Japan's financial, commercial, and political capital, we transfer to our hotel. As guests' arrival times may vary, we have no scheduled activities or meals planned.

Accommodations: Dai-ichi Hotel Tokyo

DAY 3: Tokyo

After a briefing about the journey ahead, we set out to discover a small part of this amazing city that covers a staggering 840 miles. Our sightseeing features the Meiji Shrine, a peaceful enclave of Shinto temples and gardens. We also visit the gallery of preeminent calligrapher Koshun Masunaga, where we learn about this ancient art of artistic writing and browse the collection. Our tour ends in Ginza, Tokyo's famed shopping, dining, and entertainment district, where we can stay to explore as we wish or return to our hotel for an afternoon at leisure. Tonight, we gather for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant

Accommodations: Dai-ichi Hotel Tokyo

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Tokyo

Our tour of Tokyo continues this morning at the Imperial Palace, surrounded by moats and ramparts and home of the Imperial Family. Here we visit the East Gardens, part of the innermost circle of defense of the historic Edo Castle that once stood here. We continue on to the Buddhist Asakusa Kannon, Tokyo's oldest temple (c. 645 CE), and the adjacent Nakamise shopping arcade, dating to the 17th century. Lastly, we visit the Tokyo National Museum, housing an extensive collection of art and antiquities from Japan and other Asian countries. This afternoon is free for independent exploration; lunch and dinner are on our own in this city with endless dining options.

Accommodations: Dai-ichi Hotel Tokyo

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Tokyo/Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park/Hakone

Japan's pastoral side is on tap as we leave Tokyo for Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. Here sits imposing Mt. Fuji, a dormant volcano (it last erupted in 1707) with a perfectly symmetrical cone that rises to 12,388 feet. We learn about environmental and conservation efforts on the mountain at the Mt. Fuji World Heritage Center and then enjoy a relaxing cruise on Ashi Lake, with Mt. Fuji in the background. Leaving the park, we travel to the town of Hakone, where we spend the night at a *ryokan*, a traditional Japanese inn where we take off our shoes upon entering. After enjoying a Japanese-style *Kaiseki* dinner, we spend the night sleeping on a futon.

Accommodations: Hakone Setsugetsuka

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Hakone/Takayama

Today we travel first by bullet train then by Wide View Hida express train to lovely Takayama in the Japanese Alps, considered one of the country's most attractive places with its beautifully preserved Old Town and historic buildings. Our explorations center on three narrow streets in the San-machi-suji district where, in feudal times, merchants lived amidst the authentically preserved small inns, teahouses, and sake breweries. This afternoon we attend a traditional Japanese tea ceremony here, a historic ritual of form, grace, and spirituality.

Accommodations: Hida Hotel Plaza

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Takayama

We pay an early visit to the riverside Miyagawa Morning Market, a blaze of dazzling colors and foodstuffs. Here we'll gather ingredients for lunch then we will prepare it together at a nearby kitchen. After enjoying the fruits of our labors, we embark on a walking tour, visiting Takayama Jinya, an historic government house; the local sake brewery; and Takayama's old town, whose well-preserved buildings and homes date to the Edo Period (1600–1868).

Accommodations: Hida Hotel Plaza

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8: Takayama/Shirakawago/Kanazawa

We leave Takayama this morning for the UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawago Gassho-zukuri Village. Comprising buildings relocated from authentic villages nearby that were razed for a dam, the village is also a vibrant community whose residents work together to preserve the unique traditional architecture here known as Gassho style. Then we visit Gokayama Village to see how traditional Japanese *washi* paper is made. Late this afternoon we reach the castle town of Kanazawa, an alluring coastal city that survived the ravages of World War II. We dine tonight at a local Japanese restaurant.

Accommodations: Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9: Kanazawa

Today's tour of this culturally rich city features renowned Kenrokuen Garden, a national landmark whose origins date to 1676. We also see Ishikawa Gate, the only remaining section of the town's original castle; Hakukokan, a museum celebrating the art and craft of gold leaf technology; and the Higashi Chayagai teahouse and *geisha* area. Last, we visit the Kutani Kosen Kiln, where artists fashion the prized, highly decorated pottery.

Accommodations: Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Kanazawa/Kyoto

We depart this morning by train for Kyoto, formerly Japan's Imperial Capital and now the country's cultural and artistic center with more than 1,600 temples, hundreds of shrines, artful gardens, and historic architecture. Upon arrival, we visit Kinkaku-ji, the beloved lakeside Temple of the Golden Pavilion set on pillars suspended over the water. Next: Ryoanji, a Zen Buddhist temple whose acclaimed dry garden epitomizes the simplicity of Zen meditation. Late this afternoon we reach our hotel; dinner tonight is on our own.

Accommodations: The Thousand Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11: Kyoto

More of Kyoto is on tap today, beginning with a visit to the otherworldly Arashiyama Bamboo Grove; the Kyoto Museum of Traditional Crafts (Fureaikan), showcasing all of Kyoto's 74 different *métiers* in one place; and Nijo-jo Castle (ca. 1603), the extravagant residence and fortifications of the *shoguns* who ruled Japan for more than 250 years. Then the remainder of the afternoon is free for independent exploration in this traditional yet modern city before we gather for dinner together tonight.

Accommodations: The Thousand Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Kyoto

We continue our encounter with Kyoto today, first at the important Fushimi Inari shrine, with its trails straddled by red *torii* gates; Sanjyusangendo Hall (c. 1266), an important Buddhist temple housing 1,000 statues of the Thousand-Armed Kannon deity; and Nishiki Market, "Kyoto's Kitchen" of restaurants, stores, and stalls selling everything food-related. Then this afternoon is at leisure; tonight we toast our Japan adventure at a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodations: The Thousand Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 13: Depart Kyoto for U.S.

This morning we travel by motorcoach to Osaka, where we board our return flight to the United States.

Meals: Breakfast

PLEASE NOTE

In 2024 dinner will be included on Days 8 and 10 instead of Days 9 and 11.

This tour itinerary was generated for Insider's Japan on Mar 1, 2024. Please visit the Insider's Japan page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/asia-the-far-east/insiders-japan/> for the latest and most accurate information.