

GTC
GREENHILLS
TRAVEL CENTRE

JAPAN PAST & PRESENT



17-day Small Group Tour

16 April - 02 May 2023

Includes Private transfers to and from Sydney • International airfares and taxes • 16-nights accommodation • Many meals • All entrance fees to sights • Japanese tour guide • Coach and high-speed train travel • Tour jacket

\$12,425*pp twin share
Single supplement \$2,350*pp
(subject to availability)

ATAS
travel accredited

A MEMBER OF
TRAVELLERS
CHOICE

ITINERARY

Day 1 Sun, 16 Apr Maitland - Sydney

Depart Maitland for Sydney for our overnight stay.

Day 2 Mon, 17 Apr. Sydney - Tokyo, Japan (B, L inflight)

Depart Sydney approximately 9.00 am, arrive in Tokyo approximately 5.00pm and transfer to your hotel.

Day 3 Tue, 18 Apr. Tokyo - Mt Fuji - Tokyo (B, L)

We spend our first day in Japan enjoying a day trip to Mt Fuji, the tallest peak in Japan and one of the country's most iconic symbols. This awe-inspiring volcano has long been a site of spiritual importance and a source of artistic inspiration with its near perfect mountainous shape.

Day 4 Wed, 19 Apr. Tokyo (B)

Say "Konnichiwa!" to the incredible, eclectic city of Tokyo. Japan is a land of contrasts, and you're about to discover the thousand facets of culture, art, and life that make up its incredible spirit. From neon-lit streets filled with people to quiet shrines filled only with silence, you'll come face-to-face with a culture thousands of years in the making. Storied history, artistic traditions, cutting-edge technology - it's all part of Japan's everyday life. You'll soon discover that you could explore Japan for a thousand years and only experience a part of what this country has to offer.

Day 5 Thu, 20 Apr. Tokyo (B, D)

This morning, start your day in Tokyo like a true local - by hopping on the subway. Clean, efficient, fast, and easy to use, the Tokyo subway system is one of the best in the world. Follow your tour manager on a walk through Ginza, one of the most elegant and luxurious streets in the world. Enjoy shopping at some of the most renowned "department stores" in Japan. This afternoon, visit Zojoji Temple, standing in the shadow of Tokyo Tower and painting a powerful picture of Tokyo's ancient roots and modern culture. Zojoji is the centre of Japanese Buddhism in the region, and the resting place of the royal Tokugawa family. Head back to the hotel through the lush and beautiful Shiba park, a green oasis in the urban landscape. Tonight, sit down and get to know your fellow travellers at a welcome dinner.

Day 6 Fri, 21 Apr. Tokyo (B)

Feel the excitement start to build as you head to Asakusa, passing by the grounds of the Imperial Palace and see the Nijubashi Bridge and Sakurada Gate. Experience the subtle and gentle art of the green tea ceremony. In a special demonstration, you'll learn about the ancient practice that is used to calm the mind, shift the focus away from the day-to-day of life, and appreciate the moment. Enjoy free time exploring Nakamise shopping street, where you can stroll between the stalls leading to the Sensoji temple to buy local souvenirs and sweets. Then, head to Tokyo National Museum to learn about the fascinating history and culture of the city. The museum displays artwork and antiques from Japan and the surrounding area.

Day 7 Sat, 22 Apr. Tokyo - Ise-Shima (B, D)

Climb aboard the high-speed shinkansen, or bullet train. Sleek, modern, and comfortable, the bullet train will flash through the idyllic Japanese countryside at 200 miles per hour, but you'll barely feel or hear a thing. Keep an eye peeled for Mt. Fuji in the distance. Arrive at one of the most important shrines in Japan - Ise Shrine. This grand shrine is built to honour the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu. Wander among the thatched roofs and raw wood of buildings, taking in the serenity of this spiritual wonder. Tonight, your meal will be a traditional and delicious Japanese kaiseki dinner, an artfully prepared and presented, multi-course meal using ingredients at the absolute peak of freshness.

Day 8 Sun, 23 Apr. Ise-Shima (B, D)

Enjoy a relaxing start today. Perhaps you'll take advantage of the hotel's scenic walking trails that lead to a picturesque beach. Later this morning, you'll head to the Mikimoto Pearl Museum. Explore the island and the legacy of the skilled ama pearl divers, women who defied conventional gender roles to dive in the sea to harvest oysters and their pearls. Watch divers take the plunge and learn about the history and science of pearl diving. This evening, set out for Azurihama Beach, where you'll venture across the sands to an ama hut for an incredible dining experience. Whilst local seafood is grilled in a charcoal fire right before your eyes, hear tales from the ama women about their lives and the sacred rights of their profession.

Day 9 Mon, 24 Apr. Ise-Shima - Kyoto (B)

Kyoto awaits! Before arriving in Japan's former capital city stop at Nara Park and Todaiji Temple. Venture inside the massive building to take some time in this sacred place and find the huge bronze Buddha statue. Wander the grounds outside and discover the famous bowing deer of Nara. Next, it's off to Kyoto, one of the nation's top cosmopolitan cities.

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Day 10 Tue, 25 Apr. Kyoto (B, D)

Begin your day at Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion, a Zen temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Once the lavish retirement home of a shogun, it was converted to a Zen temple in the 1400's. It has survived wars, been rebuilt after fires, and still stands as an impressive piece of historic architecture. Depart for the Arashiyama bamboo forest. Set out among the towering bamboo stalks that shade the forest paths and gently sway in the breeze. Later, visit the Women's Association of Kyoto in a traditional Kyoto town house. Here, delve into a wide array of enlightening Japanese activities, guided by your knowledgeable hostess. Sip different sakes, try your hand at making sushi, fold intricate origami shapes, and speak to your hostess about Japan, its culture, and women's roles in this complex society.

Day 11 Wed, 26 Apr. Kyoto (B)

Head to Gion, Kyoto's famous geisha district. Here, your tour manager leads you through the narrow cobblestone streets and if you're lucky, you may see a woman in full traditional geisha regalia headed to one of the hidden, exclusive tea houses. Enjoy the rest of your day at leisure to explore how you want. Perhaps you'll stay in the Gion district to wander among its temples, shrines, traditional shops and charming cafes. Or, you could make your way to the Nishiki Market, where colourful stalls are filled with fresh foods and local specialties, like pickles, dried seafood, and sushi.

Day 12 Thu, 27 Apr. Kyoto - Mt. Koya (B, D)

Today, head for the mountain village atop Mount Koya. A special and sacred site, Mount Koya is filled with shrines, temples, and monasteries. When you arrive, walk into the heart of the awe-inspiring Okunin Cemetery and make your way to the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi, the founder of Shingon Buddhism. Kobo Daishi hasn't passed on - Buddhist belief says he waits in eternal meditation, answering the calls of those who would pray to him. Settle into your accommodations for the night - a traditional Japanese monastery complete with sliding paper doors and tatami mats. Meet with one of the monks of the temple and learn about life there before sitting down for dinner, where you'll eat an incredibly delicious vegetarian meal, featuring tempura-fried favourites.

Day 13 Fri, 28 Apr. Mt. Koya - Hiroshima (B, L)

If you so choose, you can rise in the early morning to join the Buddhist monks in prayer. Sit in the serenity of the temple shrine as the monks ring their gongs, chant, burn incense, and centre themselves for the activities of the grand day ahead. Then, you'll once again board the shinkansen bullet train and be whisked away to Hiroshima. Enjoy lunch at a local cooking studio, where you'll learn how to make the famous Japanese okonomiyaki, or savoury pancake, a favourite of Hiroshima residents. After, visit the Peace Memorial Park and pause to see the ruined Atomic Dome, a sobering reminder of the devastation caused by the dropping of the atomic bomb during World War II. Reflect at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

Day 14 Sat, 29 Apr. Hiroshima (B)

Head back to the Peace Park and Memorial Museum this morning for a powerful impact moment, a meeting with someone who experienced the devastating effects of the Atomic bomb firsthand. They'll talk about what it was like to live in Japan during that time, the aftermath of that terrible day and how they keep the memories of those who were lost alive. After, board a ferry for the short trip to Miyajima Island, or 'Shrine Island'. Famous for the Itsukushima Shrine and its mythic O-torii Gate standing proudly in the water.

Day 15 Sun, 30 Apr. Hiroshima - Osaka (B, D)

Today, journey to your final destination, the energetic city of Osaka. Set out on a walking tour through the famous Dotonbori district. From shopping, to dining, to nightlife, Dotonbori has it all - bathed in the neon glow of huge electric signs. Learn why Osaka is known as the 'Kitchen of Japan' as you sample its famous and delicious street food. Tonight, sit down and say your fond farewells to your travel companions at a farewell dinner. Raise a cup of sake and toast to the colourful spirit of Japan, and the adventures you've had.

Day 16 Mon, 01 May. Osaka - Sydney (B, D inflight)

Take a quiet moment to reflect on all the new memories you have created. This morning you'll have free before heading to Osaka Airport for your flight home via Tokyo.

Day 17 Thu, 02 May. Sydney - Maitland (B inflight)

Arrive Sydney and transfer back to Maitland.

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IMPORTANT TRIP INFORMATION

- Passports are required at your own expense for travel outside of Australia. A minimum of 6 months passport validity beyond the return date to Australia. We recommend that our guests take a photocopy of their passport. It should be packed separately from your actual passport. We also recommend leaving a copy at home with your emergency contact.
- Single accommodations are limited and are available on a first come, first served basis. Triple and child accommodations are not available.
- The days and order of sightseeing may change to best utilise your time on tour.
- Some venues, such as temples and shrines, require guests to remove their shoes to enter. We recommend wearing footwear that is easily removed for sightseeing on these days.
- Museum visits and shopping may be affected by the observance of religious or local holidays.
- Travel with just 16-24 guests on this tour where a smaller group setting means a more personal travel experience.
- The overall activity level of this tour is a level 4. This means you're ready to seize the day, whatever it may bring. You lead an active life at home (walking, biking, and hiking are things you may enjoy) and few thousand steps a day isn't out of the norm. You can handle longer walking tours (more than 90 minutes), traversing dusty or uneven terrain, standing for periods of time, varying altitudes and temperatures and don't mind being on the go with some early starts, late-night experiences, and full days. Unfortunately, this level is not appropriate for individuals who use wheelchairs or walkers.
- Each guest is responsible for proper documentation and inoculations that may be required and/or recommended to participate on this tour. Please contact your local travel clinic or personal doctor for specific details on the destinations you are travelling to and from.
- Please be advised many airlines do not provide advance seat assignments until check-in at the airport. Advance seating will be subject to the airline's terms and conditions.
- This tour provides authentic Japanese dining experiences. Any special meal requests, including vegan, vegetarian, or gluten-free may not be able to be accommodated as these are not widely catered to. If you have any dietary restrictions, please notify us at time of booking so we can accommodate you as best as possible.
- This tour features a one-night experiential stay at a traditional monastery. During this stay, portage is not available and rolling luggage is not allowed inside. An overnight bag is required, your main luggage will stay on the coach. You will not be able to access your main luggage until we check-in at Hiroshima Hotel 5.00pm the following day. Accommodations at the monastery are traditional. All guests will sleep on tatami mats that are placed on the floor. Western-style beds are not available. Therefore, this tour is not recommended for those with mobility restrictions. Shoes are not permitted inside the monastery. Socks are highly recommended for use during your time here. Meals are also traditional and served on trays that you eat from while sitting on the floor on a cushion. All meals served at the monastery are vegetarian.



Tokyo



Kyoto



Osaka

17-day tour from **\$12,425*** pp twin share

Single supplement \$2,350* pp (subject to availability)

No triple share rooms or children under 12 years

Inclusions:

- International airfares and taxes
- Fully escorted from Maitland
- Private transfers to and from Sydney
- 16-nights accommodation
- 16 Breakfasts, 2 Lunch's, 7 Dinners
- Entrance fees to all attractions
- Japanese tour guide
- Coach and high-speed train travel
- Tour jacket
- Maximum 24 passengers

Visit our [website](#) to see our
other small group tours.

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