



***Essential Japan***

Discover the highlights of Japan with this superb itinerary. This 13-night itinerary will enable you to see the best of Tokyo and Kyoto and give you the opportunity to get off the beaten track and explore the wonderful Japan Alps. You begin your journey in the buzzing metropolis of Tokyo before leaving the hustle and bustle behind to relax in the resort town of Hakone. Located in the foothills of Mt Fuji you can unwind in the soothing natural hot springs before getting on the bullet train to Kyoto. Kyoto is the cultural heartland of Japan, and you will explore the highlights of this wonderful city.

Takayama is a small town in the Japan Alps and here you can experience a bit of the traditional Japan. A short trip away is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawago where you can wander around the picturesque A-framed thatched houses. On the way back to Tokyo you will stay overnight in Matsumoto the highlight of which being the splendid castle, considered one of Japan's best.

## Tokyo

Home to over 12 million people, the vast metropolis of Japan's capital must be seen to be believed. Tokyo embraces the modern and ancient like no other city on earth and offers something for everyone who wants to delve into the Japanese phenomenon: the towering skyscrapers and frenzied neon of Shinjuku, the pop culture and gadget paradise of Akihabara, the sophisticated chic of Ginza, the old downtown area of Asakusa, and the tranquil, understated beauty of Meiji Shrine. Not to mention superb restaurants and great bars as well as fabulous shopping and museums befitting the capital of the world's second-largest economy.



## Hakone

The beautiful resort of Hakone is set in the foothills of Mt Fuji. The proximity to Tokyo means that this is a popular spot for weekenders to visit to enjoy the majestic scenery and to luxuriate in the natural hot springs in this volcanic region. Whilst here you can wander the peaceful surroundings and visit such attractions such as the Open Air Sculpture Park, Lake Ashi and Owakudani (literally 'Great Boiling Valley').

## Kyoto

Kyoto is where you will find the Japan of silent temples nestling in bamboo groves, gardens of finely raked sand and bewitching geisha. This city is home to over 2,000 temples and shrines, exquisite crafts and some of the best cuisine in the country. In short, Kyoto is the heartbeat of traditional Japan.

Not to be missed are Kinkaku-ji, Ginkaku-ji and Kiyomizu temples, although be aware that these do become crowded. For a more peaceful, intimate temple experience we recommend the temple complex of Daitoku-ji, in particular Daisen- in sub-temple, and the Arashiyama area to the west of the city.



## Takayama

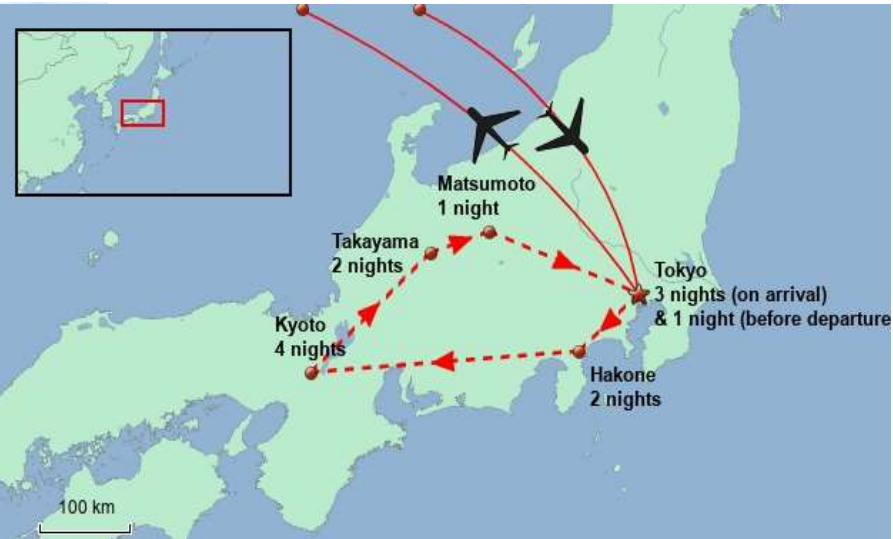
Established as a castle town in the 16th century, Takayama has retained its unique charm to the present day. Sights include the Sanmachi district of traditional buildings, the bustling morning markets and dozens of museums, galleries and traditional craft shops. Situated in the Japan Alps, this small city offers wonderful views of the surrounding mountains and is a good base for exploring the Hida region.

## Matsumoto

The second largest city southwest of Nagano, Matsumoto is famous for its Matsumoto-jo, one of the most original castles in Japan which includes the oldest keep in Japan. Thanks to its characteristic black façade and walls, it is also known by the locals as the karasu-jo (crow castle). The city is also a good base to explore the Japanese Alps.



# Essential Japan



## The Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrival in Japan, Meet & Greet at Narita Airport or Haneda Airport (Tokyo)

Welcome to Japan! Our friendly Meet & Greet service representative will be waiting in the Arrivals lobby and holding a sign with your name on. The Meet & Greet will direct you to the Narita Express train or Airport Limousine Bus bound for Tokyo. Check in to your hotel in central Tokyo for 3 nights.

### Day 2: Tokyo

Your options are unlimited in this incredible city. Explore Tokyo's past in the bustling, traditional Asakusa district, shop in the fashionable districts of Shibuya and Harajuku and dine on Japan's finest cuisine. Tokyo is relatively straightforward to navigate, and our Information Pack will make travelling around the city a breeze.

#### Optional guided excursion

*Enjoy a full day of sightseeing by coach in Tokyo, with lunch included. Your guide will show you the highlights of this vast metropolis, from the Imperial Palace and serene Meiji Shrine to the 'Electric City' of Akihabara.*

### Day 3: Tokyo

Enjoy a further day of exploring in Tokyo or use your Japan Rail Pass to venture further afield to Kamakura, a former capital of Japan.

#### Optional guided excursion

*Join a fantastic, guided excursion to Nikko, a beautiful temple town in the mountains north of Tokyo. You will visit Toshogu Shrine, a mausoleum to one of Japan's most famous shogun, and drive through the picturesque countryside to Lake Chuzenji and Kegon Waterfall before heading back to Tokyo.*

### Day 4: Tokyo to Hakone

It's time to say goodbye to Tokyo for a few days as you speed on the Bullet Train to Hakone, a beautiful resort set in the foothills of Mt Fuji. For the next two nights you will stay either in a traditional Japanese Guesthouse (3\* option) or in a traditional Japanese Ryokan (4\* option) both properties have hot springs.

### Day 5: Hakone

Hakone is the perfect place to relax and unwind. Today you can enjoy wandering in the peaceful, beautiful surroundings of this resort town. You might like to visit some of the surrounding attractions such as the Open-Air Sculpture Park, Lake Ashi and Owakudani (literally 'Great Boiling Valley').

### Day 6: Hakone to Kyoto

Use Board the Bullet Train again and head to Kyoto which is blessed with many temples and shrines. The journey takes less than 3 hours, leaving you plenty of time to enjoy the late afternoon in Kyoto, where we recommend a stroll around the lovely side streets. You will stay in a comfortable, superbly located hotel in the heart of Kyoto for 4 nights.

### Day 7: Kyoto

A rich history of religion, art and craft have combined to make this glorious city a spiritual home for the Japanese. For temples we recommend Kiyomizu-dera and Ginkaku-ji in the hills to the east of the city. Nijo Castle is also well worth a visit, and make sure you allow yourself plenty of time for the wonderful craft shops and delightful streets of Gion, the old geisha quarter.

#### Optional guided excursion

*Join a guided coach tour. As well as visits to Nijo Castle, Kinkaku-ji (The Golden Temple), Sanjusangendo Temple and Kiyomizu Temple, today's tour includes a delicious buffet-style lunch.*

### Day 8: Nara at leisure

Whilst smaller than Kyoto, Nara is packed with attractions, with 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The most outstanding of these is Todai-ji temple, until recently one of the largest wooden buildings in the world and home to the Great Buddha statue – Japan's biggest. Other essential sights include Yakushi-ji and Horyu-ji temple, whose buildings include some of the world's oldest wooden structures.

#### Optional guided excursion

*Spend the afternoon on a guided coach tour to Nara. Your guide will take you around Todaiji temple and Nara Park followed by visits to Kasuga Taisha Shrine before heading back to Kyoto by coach.*

### Day 9: Kyoto/Osaka at leisure

Spend another day in Kyoto or alternatively use your JR Pass to explore the surrounding area. Japan's lively second city, Osaka, is only a short train ride away. Hiroshima is also possible as a day excursion.

### Day 10: Kyoto to Takayama

Leave Kyoto and transfer by Bullet and local train to Takayama, a lovely town in the Japan Alps. Takayama's atmospheric streets, museums and folkcrafts make it a great place to discover rural Japan. It is also a superb base for exploring the surrounding Hida district and National Park.

For 2 nights you will stay either in traditional Japanese Minshuku (family inn, 3\* option) or in a centrally located 4\* hotel.

### Day 11: Takayama, Furukawa

Further sightseeing in Takayama might include Hida no Sato, an open-air museum of traditional architecture and crafts. Another excursion we recommend is Furukawa, a lovely village less than 20 minutes from Takayama.



### Price Includes:

#### Day 12: Matsumoto

Travel by coach to Matsumoto, where you will arrive around lunchtime. Spend the afternoon at Matsumoto Castle, one of the most impressive castles in Japan, and enjoy strolling around the pretty, laidback streets of this mountain town. You will stay in a hotel in central Matsumoto.

#### Day 13: Tokyo

After breakfast take the train back to Tokyo. Check in to your previous hotel for your final night in Japan. You might want to splash out on a fabulous farewell meal at one of Tokyo's Michelin star restaurants. If your flight is early in the morning, we can also provide accommodation at an airport hotel.

#### Day 14: Depart Japan

Transfer from your hotel to Haneda or Narita International Airport (Tokyo). Return to the UK (arrive same day).

- 9 nights' accommodation in Twin/Double rooms at 3\* or 4\* hotels in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Matsumoto on a bed & breakfast basis
- 2 nights' accommodation in a Japanese Style room at a Japanese Guesthouse (3\* option) or in a Japanese Ryokan (4\* option) in Hakone on a bed & breakfast basis
- 2 nights' accommodation in a western style room at a traditional *Minshuku* (3\* option) or in a Twin/Double room at a 4\* hotel in Takayama on a bed & breakfast basis
- 14-day Japan Rail Pass allowing you unlimited travel on the entire Japan Rail network including Shinkansen (Bullet Train) services
- Transfer from and to Narita International Airport/Tokyo or Haneda Airport by Express Train or Airport Limousine Bus
- Meet & Greet service on arrival at Narita or Haneda International Airport (Tokyo)
- Detailed Japan Journeys Information Pack including detailed train schedules, maps, & brochures.
- Personalised Japan Journeys App to help manage your documents
- All Japanese sales taxes and service charge
- Full financial protection via Japan Journeys' membership of the Travel Trust Association through which your monies are held in a Trust Account until you return home (under Membership No. U3078)

### Not Included In Price:

- International airfare
- Meals not mentioned above.
- Entrance fees
- Takayama to Matsumoto coach tickets (3,200 JPY each)
- Taxi, subway and tramway fees
- Travel Insurance

### Optional Guided Excursions:

<b>Tokyo:</b>	£101.00 per person <i>full day, including lunch</i>
<b>Nikko:</b>	£150.00 per person <i>full day, including lunch</i>
<b>Kyoto:</b>	£111.00 per person <i>full day, including lunch</i>
<b>Nara Afternoon:</b>	£72.00 per person

**3\* Accommodation: £1,945.00 per person based on a Double/Twin Room Occupancy**

**3\* Single Room Occupancy: £2,345.00**

**4\* Accommodation: £3,195.00 per person based on a Double/Twin Room Occupancy**

**4\* Single Room Occupancy: £3,795.00**

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