



The Way of the Samurai Tour

Bushido – or Way of the Samurai – is a deep philosophy that dictated the life of the samurai, filled with various rules, codes of honour and martial arts teachings that still influences parts of Japanese society. This itinerary is perfect for those with an interest in samurai, ninja and Japanese history. This 14-night independent tour includes an exciting variety of samurai related historical sites, as well as personalised experiences instructed by experts that will give an authentic insight into samurai philosophy and martial arts. You will start out in Tokyo, where the Tokugawa clan shogun ruled throughout the Edo period, before you head north to Aizu, a beautiful mountainous area domestically famous for its powerful feudal lords and legendary samurai units. Next, stop by historical Nikko, before visiting Kamakura - the first Japanese capital ruled by a shogun. Head on to the cultural capital of Kyoto, from where you will take a daytrip to the home village of the Iga ninja clan. Return home from Kansai International Airport.

EXTEND OR TWEAK YOUR TRIP in Japan in any way you want! We will tailor-make an itinerary based on your preferences. Maybe you would like more time in the nature, or maybe you prefer the pulsating metropolises? Maybe you you'd like to skip and/or add another destination? Is there a specific activity you like to try or learn more about in Japan? We will take care of it! Please let us know, and we will come up with a solution matching your budget.

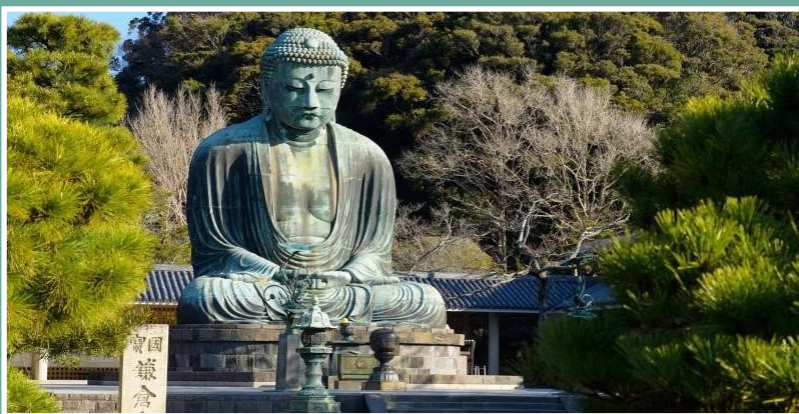
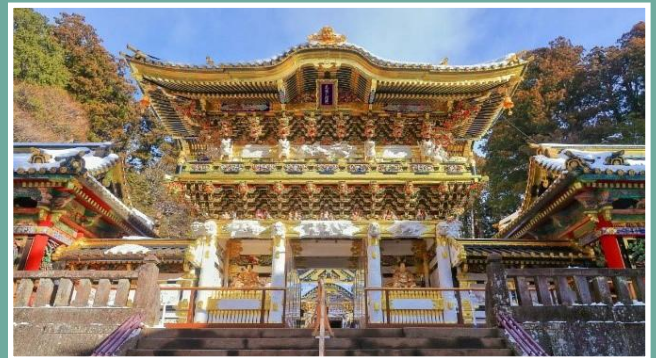


Tokyo

Home to over 13 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 and so on. Not to mention superb restaurants and great bars as well as fabulous shopping and museums befitting the capital of one of the world's greatest economies.

Nikko

North of Tokyo in Tochigi Prefecture lies Nikko, a beautiful and historic town. Most famous for Toshogu, Japan's most lavishly decorated shrine, the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu and Nikko National Park, it is one of the most iconic places to visit in the North Kanto region. Full of natural forests, waterfalls, important World Heritage sites and natural hot springs, it's no wonder this area has been a holiday destination for people from all over the world.



Kamakura

The coastal town of Kamakura lies south of Tokyo and is a very popular tourist destination. Sometimes called the 'Kyoto of Eastern Japan', Kamakura offers numerous temples, shrines and other historical monuments such as the Kamakura Great Buddha, one of Japan's most famous Buddhist statues.

Aizu

Aizu is a mountainous region in Tohoku (North-East Honshu) with Aizu-Wakamatsu being the central city. The local government brands it the "samurai city", and with good reason! During the Edo period, this was the home of exceptionally powerful feudal lords who educated and hired large amounts of samurai that were sent on missions all over the country. When war erupted between the shogunate and the Emperor's forces, Aizu was the last samurai domain to be defeated, a narrative popularized in the West through the film "The Last Samurai". Needless to say, this is a mecca for anyone interested in samurai history, but it is also a paradise in terms of natural beauty as it is filled with winding rivers and steaming hot springs, and it is surrounded by towering mountains in all directions. Furthermore, Aizu is famous for its food, such as the luxurious Aizu-beef and the cheap and deliciously addictive Kitakata Ramen noodle soup.



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.

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The Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Japan, Meet & Greet at Narita/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 Express Train bound for central Tokyo. Check in to your clean and comfortable 3* hotel for the next 3 nights.

Day 2: Tokyo

(Start using your 14 Day Japan Rail Pass today)

Your options are unlimited in this incredible city, which was Japan's de facto capital through the Edo period (1603 -1868). 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, like a course of Fugu fish which could be fatal was it not for traditional preparation techniques passed down through generations. Tokyo is relatively straightforward to navigate, and our Information Pack will make travelling around the city a breeze. Maybe you would like to go see a historical Kabuki play, or pretend to be Zatoichi while learning the basics of a traditional Japanese musical



instrument like the shamisen? We are ready to make the arrangements! You might spend your time today seeing the modern wonders of this buzzing capital, or you may seek out some of the beautiful bubbles from the past. We recommend the Edo period Rikugien, considered Tokyo's most beautiful Japanese landscape garden alongside Koishikawa Korakuen.

Day 3: Tokyo

After breakfast, head to Tokyo Imperial Palace which has been the Emperors' residence since 1868, after the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown. Over the course of the Edo period, 15 members of the Tokugawa clan ruled Japan from Edo

castle, which stood where the Imperial Palace stands today. Edo castle was probably the largest castle in the history of Japan, and while the actual castle is long gone, you will be able to envision its scale as you gaze at the remaining original moats and gates. Please note that only parts of the Imperial Palace grounds and gardens are available to visitors. Afterwards, go on a stroll from the castle grounds to Nihombashi bridge, the historical centre of Tokyo. From here you can go on a cruise along Tokyo's original waterways, or if your trip coincides with a Sumo tournament the arena is not far away! Also nearby is the highly recommended Edo Tokyo Museum, abundant with original artefacts and elaborate models giving you a vivid insight into life in Edo/Tokyo during the days of the samurai.

Day 4: Tokyo to Aizu

Today you will head to Aizuwakamatsu, where the last samurai fought against the Emperor's modernised forces in the Boshin War (1868-1869). Half the 3-hour journey will be by Bullet Train, while the latter half will be by local train going through picturesque valleys and countryside farmlands. You will stay in a centrally located comfortable hotel





for the next 2 nights. In the afternoon we recommend you visit the beautiful samurai-era medicinal gardens famous for being capable of growing high-quality Korean ginseng – still regarded as one of the most powerful traditional medicines in Asia. If you examine the teahouse here, you will notice cuts in the walls from the samurai war. Next, stop by the bukeyashiki, a completely restored mansion where one of the richest daimyo (feudal lord), once resided. The mansion has many exhibitions portraying scenes in the lives of samurai. In the evening, you can visit a local sake brewery, or we can arrange for an authentic traditional tea ceremony. Aizu is also famous for its delicious local foods like Aizu beef and freshwater fish. As you are quite far off the beaten track, the prices here are much friendlier than in bigger cities, making it a great place also for budget-minded travellers to experience a traditional private geisha performance over dinner, which we are happy to arrange for!

Day 5: Aizu with full-day English Speaking Japanese Guide

Today your guide will stay with you for 8 hours of the day, taking you around on foot and by public transport (included in price). You might have many questions about samurai and Japan in general, and we encourage you to ask your



knowledgeable guide about anything that comes to mind. First stop today is Nisshinkan – an authentic samurai school recently rebuilt where visitors can learn about and experience Zen meditation as well trying Kyudo - traditional Japanese archery. As many of Nisshinkan’s visitors are Japanese domestic tourists with a serious interest in history and culture, you are right to expect the instructors to be highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals. Your Japanese guide will act as your interpreter! Next you will head to Mt limori and the unique Sazaedo temple. This is where the Byakkotai, a famous unit of teenage samurai, met their end, and your guide will tell you all about it while tracing their final footsteps. Last stop for today is the imposing Tsurugajo castle and the adjoining Butokuden Dojo. At the Dojo, professional Kendo instructors will teach you how to fight like a samurai by using traditional Kendo swords of bamboo. Finish the day by exploring the rebuilt castle and its exhibitions.

Day 6: Aizu

After a leisurely morning, head back on the train and go deeper in the countryside where you will stay in a traditional ryokan for one night. Here you can enjoy the peaceful nature and revitalise your mind and body in the natural hot springs which are famous in the area. Enjoy your ryokan with a cup of green tea or a sip of sake, or jump in a taxi to Ouchi-juku – an Edo era village that has been preserved by the locals with help from the government. Here, electric wires are buried in the ground, and the dedicated inhabitants take great care of their very old and traditional houses they still reside in. This village was originally used as a resting spot on the samurai walking path from Aizu through Nikko to Edo (Tokyo). The surrounding scenery is green and lush in summer, and snowy white in winter. Tonight, enjoy a delicious dinner in your ryokan, included in your stay.



Day 7: Aizu to Nikko

Enjoy a tasty breakfast and some more quality relaxation in your ryokan and hot springs before heading out and getting back on the train. You will take a different route to the one that brought you here, this time enjoying more scenery on a train following the samurai path to Nikko. Nikko is a beautiful temple town in the mountains between Aizu and Tokyo. One of the iconic spots to visit is Toshogu Shrine, Japan’s most lavishly decorated shrine and the final resting place of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate. If you are feeling energetic, we recommend a pleasant walk along the Kanmangafuchi Abyss, known for its row of 70 stone statues of Jizo. Be sure to check out the Shinkyo Bridge (‘sacred bridge’), ranked as one of Japan’s three finest bridges; and the Cedar Avenue, one of the world’s longest tree-lined roads with approximately 12,000 existing cedars. Check in to your comfortable hotel for the next 2 nights.

Day 8: Nikko at leisure

Explore Nikko further or venture out west through the picturesque countryside to Lake Chuzenji, a scenic lake located at the foot of Mount Nantai, and Kegon Waterfall, ranked as one of Japan’s three most beautiful falls. You also might like



to visit Chuzenjiko Onsen, a hot spring resort town at the eastern shores of Lake Chuzenji, where you can go on a relaxing sightseeing cruise around the lake.

Day 9: Nikko to Kamakura

Head back to Nikko station from where you will head for Kamakura. While Aizu is the land of the last samurai, Kamakura is where the samurai first emerged, as the first Shogunate of Japan established this city as the military and political capital during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Also known as the 'Kyoto of Eastern Japan', Kamakura offers numerous temples, shrines and other historical monuments. Today check out attractions in the vicinity of the city centre, such as the enormous Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, and the Komachi Dori shopping street, filled with cosy shops selling traditional street food, sweets and souvenirs. Check into your centrally located hotel for the next two nights.

Day 10: Kamakura at leisure

Today we recommend you go station hopping on the 120-year-old Enoden trainline which vintage trains uniquely run along streets, between houses, past many historical temples, and then along the coastline offering varied beautiful scenery the rails' 10km stretch. Be sure to stop for Kotoku-in temple and the 11.4-meter-high Great Buddha statue originally built over 750 years ago. Also stop at the Kamakura period Hasedera temple, Zeniarai Benzaiten Ugafuku Shrine, Hokokuji Temple with its pacifying bamboo grove and more! In summertime you might enjoy a snack on the beach while watching the many surfers chase the waves here.

Day 11: Kamakura to Kyoto

Board the train and Bullet Train again and head to Kyoto which is blessed with countless temples and shrines. The journey

takes less than 3 hours, leaving you plenty of time to enjoy the afternoon in Kyoto, where we recommend a stroll around the lovely side streets. The emperors of Japan resided in the cultural capital of Kyoto from 1180 to 1868. To say that the city is overflowing with culture and history would not be an overstatement. You will stay in a superbly located hotel in the heart of Kyoto for 4 nights.

Day 12: Kyoto at leisure

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 Kinkaku-ji in the hills to the east of the city. Nijo Castle is also a must-see. This exquisite castle was built in 1603 as Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu's Kyoto residence. The Shogun only stayed there a couple of times, but this imposing castle's real purpose was to show Kyoto's citizens that the Shogunate's riches and powers surpassed even the Emperor! We also recommend the "Kyoto Samurai and Ninja Museum", with its "Kyoto Ninja Experience" ticket which includes a tour of the Museum, dressing up in full ninja costume, throwing shuriken (ninja stars), using a ninja blow gun, wearing a samurai outfit, and watching a samurai show.

Day 13: Iga Ninja-village Day Trip

Today we suggest a day trip to Iga. Iga is famous for its history of Ninja training, which dates back more than 500 years. Even after this formerly secret village was exposed and invaded by Oda Nobunaga in 1581, Iga clan members including the famous Hattori Hanzo were later hired as bodyguards for Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu. As the ninja excelled at secrecy, factual historical records are scarce, and their modern image is heavily influenced by fictional movie representations. Today's Iga Ninja village caters both to visitors who want to learn more about the authentic ninja, as well as to those who are drawn





there by their modern representations. While here, check out the Ninja Museum of Iga-Ryu which has a good collection of related artefacts and weapons, and don't miss the Iga Ueno Castle, which was used for Akira Kurosawa's award-winning film Kagemusha.

Day 14: Nara or Himeji Day Trip

Spend your last full day in Japan either exploring Kyoto further, or go on another day-trip. If you go to Nara, you will have been to all permanent historic capitals of Japan. Nara was the first permanent capital for the duration of the Nara period (710-794), which was before the emergence of the samurai. Nara is the home of 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with the enormous wooden temple of Todai-ji housing the Great Buddha being the most famous. Alternatively, jump on the Bullet Train to Himeji and visit Himeji Castle. The castle built in 1609 features more than 80 buildings, and an intricately designed series of paths within the fortified complex which are designed to confuse any potential invaders. Not only is it famous for being the largest remaining Japanese castle, but also for the fact that it has survived wars and natural disasters over centuries without the need for major reconstructions.

Day 15: Depart Japan

Transfer from your hotel to Kansai International Airport (Osaka).

Price Includes:

- 13 nights' accommodation in a Twin/Double room in standard hotels in Tokyo, Aizuwakamatsu, Nikko, Kamakura and Kyoto on a bed & breakfast basis
- 1 night's accommodation in a ryokan in Aizu on a dinner, bed & breakfast basis
- Private English-Speaking Guide for 8 hours on day 5
- All transport costs including buses on day 5
- Zen meditation and Kyudo practice at Nisshinkan on day 5
- Kendo practice at Butokuden dojo on day 5
- 14-day Japan Rail Pass allowing you unlimited travel on the entire Japan Rail network including Shinkansen (Bullet Train) services
- Transfer from and to arrival and departure Airport in Japan by express train
- Meet & Greet service on arrival at Narita/Haneda International Airport (Tokyo)
- Detailed Japan Journeys digital Information Pack including detailed train schedules, maps, & brochures.
- Personalised Japan Journeys App to help manage your documents
- 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 in the itinerary
- Entrance fees
- Taxi, bus, subway and tramway fees
- Insurance

**Standard
Accommodation**
from **£2,595.00**

**per person based on twin/double
room occupancy.**

Single room supplement

Please enquire

All price estimates are based on current rates of exchange and are subject to availability. To make a booking, a deposit of **£250.00** per person is required. The balance of the price of the trip must be made 12 weeks prior to departure.

HOW OUR INDEPENDENT TOURS WORK

Enjoy independent travel but not the hassle of planning? One of our Independent Tours could be just the ticket. Carefully put together by our team of specialists, our excellent collection of sample itineraries are designed to inform and inspire your next Japan adventure. Every one of our Independent Tours is fully tailor made for you, ensuring your trip is everything you want it to be.

It's quite straight forward to travel independently in Japan. We will provide just the right amount of support and logistical planning to make you feel comfortable in a very foreign land. These itineraries are available for any departure date (with a few exclusions which coinciding with Japanese National Holidays and some weekends). We'll do all the work for you and provide you with an information pack to make your trip run smoothly. You can also add guided tours as indicated and if you do want your own personal guide we can arrange this too.

WHAT NEXT?

If you're interested in this itinerary, please let us know the following and we will get back to you with a quote:

- Your proposed dates of travel
- Your preferred grade of accommodation (e.g. 3*, 4*, or 5*)
- Your preferred room type (e.g. Double, Twin or Singles)
- How many adults and children this is for (and the age of the children at the time of travel)

NOT FROM THE UK?

Don't worry! We deal with countless passengers from outside of the UK. You just need to let us know the information above (and you can arrange your own flights to Japan).

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