

Traditional Japan

Your Japan trip at a glance:

Venture off the beaten track and experience “old” Japan as you explore some of the country’s most important cultural sites. Spend your first few days in Kyoto with its wealth of temples and shrines before exploring the picturesque old town of Kurashiki. Head on to the lakeside city of Matsue (with its famous castle and samurai houses) which will act as your base for exploring the beautiful gardens of the Adachi Museum and the Izumo Taisha - the oldest shrine in Japan. Briefly stay in Osaka before making your way to the top of the sacred Mt Koya where you will immerse yourself in the monk’s way of life by staying in temple lodgings. Then head east to Nagoya from where you will visit the wonderfully restored old post town of Tsumago, where you can walk along the Nakasendo Route which linked Tokyo to Kyoto. Before heading back to Kyoto for your final night you will take a tour to Ise Jingu Shrine - the holiest and most important Shinto site in Japan.



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.

Kurashiki & Okayama

In the Edo period Kurashiki was an important trading town for rice and later becoming known for textiles. Having largely escaped war time damage much of Kurashiki’s old storehouses, mills and shops remain in good condition. With arching bridges and weeping willows flanking the Edo period canal, Kurashiki will give you a sense of where people lived and worked in old Japan. The nearby town of Okayama is home to Korakuen, a traditional stroll garden and considered one of Japan’s three most beautiful gardens.





Osaka & Koyasan

Known as the “kitchen of Japan”, Osaka is renowned for its warm-hearted, lively locals. Osaka Castle dominates the city as the old mixes with the very modern skyline and the aquarium is not to be missed. From Osaka you can access the peaceful temple town at the top of Koyasan, one of Japan’s holiest mountains and the centre of Shingon Buddhism in Japan. Koyasan is the perfect place to experience a Buddhist monk’s way of life as you have the chance to stay in temple lodgings and eat special monk’s cuisine known as *shojin ryori*. A must-do here is a walk through Okunoin Cemetery, Japan’s largest and one of the most sacred.

Matsue

Matsue is the capital of Shimane prefecture and located on the eastern side of Lake Shinji. It is home to one of the few original castles left in Japan and the castle moat, lakes and canals give the city an almost Venetian feel. Matsue is the perfect base for visiting the wonderful Adachi Museum to the east, which is famous for its stunning gardens and art collection and also Izumo Taisha to the west, Japan’s oldest shrine.



Ise Jingu & Tsumago

From your base in Nagoya you will explore Tsumago, one of the best preserved post towns on the historic Nakasendo route that linked Kyoto to Tokyo. The town was lovingly restored and wandering around Tsumago will make you feel like you have been transported back to ancient Japan. Ise Jingu is where the Sacred Mirror (one of the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan) is said to be stored and is Japan’s most sacred shrine. After visiting the shrine it is worth taking a stroll along Oharaimachi, a shopping street made up of Edo and late Meiji era style buildings.

Japan Rail Pass

The JR Pass allows you almost unlimited travel for 7/14/21 days on **all** Japan Rail lines throughout the country. It allows you to travel on the world-famous Bullet Train (*Shinkansen*) as well as the popular ferry from Hiroshima to Miyajima.



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Japan, Meet & Greet at Kansai Airport (Osaka)

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 train to Kyoto. Check in to your hotel in Kyoto for 4 nights on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 2: 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: Kyoto Day Tour

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 also includes a delicious buffet-style lunch.

Day 3: Nara at leisure

Whilst smaller than Kyoto, Nara is no less rich in attractions, with 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sights. The most outstanding of these is Todai-ji temple, the largest wooden building 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: Nara Afternoon Tour

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 4: Kyoto

Spend another day in Kyoto where you may wish to venture out west to the leafy suburb of Arashiyama. Here you will find the magnificent bamboo forests and a hill top monkey park where you can feed monkeys and enjoy a rewarding view of Kyoto.

Day 5: Kyoto-Kurashiki-Matsue

Leave Kyoto early to make your way to Matsue located on the eastern shore of the attractive Lake Shinji. Before getting to Matsue you will stop off in the picturesque town of Kurashiki. Take a stroll along Kurashiki's beautiful canals and visit a selection of traditional, feudal era warehouses that have been converted into an eclectic collection of museums the finest of which is the Ohara Museum. In the afternoon board the train to Matsue where you will stay 2 nights.

Day 6: Matsue

Matsue is home to one of the few original castles in Japan in an area of wonderful old samurai houses. In the afternoon make a short trip to the renowned Adachi Museum which is famous for its spectacular 6 gardens (and its collection of contemporary Japanese art). The landscape gardens are composed of the best pines and rocks collected from all over Japan and can be enjoyed in any season.

Day 7: Matsue-Korakuen-Osaka

You will make your way to Japan's third largest city of Osaka where you will stay for 1 night. Osaka will give you a little taste of modern Japan and the amazing aquarium is definitely worth a visit. En route to Osaka stop off at the fantastic Korakuen Garden a traditional stroll garden in Okayama and one of Japan's three most beautiful gardens. If you have time you can wander over to the nearby Okayama Castle, also known as "Crow Castle" due to its black exterior.

Day 8: Osaka-Koyasan

The wooded mountain top of Koyasan is the centre of Shingon Buddhism in Japan and one of Japan's holiest mountains. This peaceful temple town will be your base for the night and you will have the unique opportunity to stay in temple lodgings where you can experience the monk's way of life in this simple setting by dining on delicious vegetarian Buddhist cuisine, *shojin ryori*, prepared and served to you by the monks themselves. If you are able to drag yourself away from your comfortable futon you can attend early morning prayers tomorrow morning.

Day 9: Koyasan-Osaka

After breakfast venture over to Okunoin cemetery, the largest cemetery in Japan and one of the most sacred. It is the final resting place for many feudal lords, samurai, and famous monks and the centuries old tombstones eventually lead to some very interesting modern twists on tombstones. In the afternoon return to Osaka where you can explore the lively Dotonbori district for shopping, eating and entertainment. Check back in to your hotel for 1 night.

Day 10: Nagoya

Leave Osaka early and head to Tsumago one of Japan's best preserved post towns on the Nakasendo route between Kyoto and Edo, modern Tokyo, which was used by everyone from feudal lords to pilgrims in its heyday in the 17th century. If you are feeling particularly energetic you may wish to take a taxi to the nearby post town of Magome and hike back along the famous preserved trail of the Nakasendo route. Catch the train back to Nagoya and check into your hotel for 2 nights.

Day 11: Nagoya

Today join a guided tour to Ise Jingu Shrine and Mikimoto Pearl Island. Ise Jingu shrine is considered the most important and holiest site in the Shinto religion. It is also the supposed home to the sacred mirror, one of the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan. Following Ise Jingu Shrine you will visit Mikimoto Pearl Island where you can learn all about pearls and how they were first cultivated. You will also get to see how the impressive female pearl divers, known as Ama, plant and harvest the pearls. If you are feeling extravagant why not buy some beautiful Mikimoto Pearls as a souvenir before you head back to Nagoya. A delicious lunch is included today.

Day 12: Nagoya-Kyoto

This morning catch the Bullet Train back to Kyoto for your final night in Japan. You will have most of the day to do some last minute shopping and sightseeing.

Day 13: Depart Japan

Transfer to Kansai International Airport (Osaka) for your flight back to the UK.

PRICE INCLUDES:

- 11 nights' accommodation in a Double/Twin room at 3* hotels on a bed & breakfast basis
- 1 night's accommodation in temple lodgings including a delicious **dinner** and breakfast
- 14-day Japan Rail Pass allowing you unlimited travel on the entire Japan Rail network including Shinkansen (Bullet Train) services
- Fully guided tour of Ise Jingu Shrine and Mikimoto Pearl Island with lunch on Day 11
- Meet & Greet service on arrival at Kansai International Airport (Osaka)
- Airport transfers to and from Kansai International Airport and Kyoto Station
- 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), see: <http://www.traveltrust.co.uk>

NOT INCLUDED IN PRICE:

- International airfare
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Entrance fees
- Taxi, subway and private railway fares
- Insurance
- Optional excursions (see below)

PRICE:

3* accommodation *from £1,655.00 per person based on Twin/Double room occupancy*

4* accommodation *from £2,295.00 per person based on Twin/Double room occupancy*

5* accommodation *from £2,695.00 per person based on Twin/Double room occupancy*

3* Single room occupancy *from £1,875.00*

4* Single room occupancy *from £2,745.00*

5* Single room occupancy *from £3,595.00*

Optional guided excursions:

Kyoto 1 Day: £111.00 per person

Nara Afternoon Tour: £72.00 per person

All price estimates are based on current rates of exchange and are subject to availability.

To make a booking, a deposit of **£200.00** per person is required.

The balance of the price of the trip must be made 12 weeks prior to departure.

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