



From
\$12,609 USD

Single Room

\$15,205 USD

Twin Room

\$12,609 USD

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

21 days

Duration

Japan

Destination

Level 2 - Moderate

Activity

Contemporary Japan | Small Group Tour

Oct 07 2024 to Oct 27 2024

Contemporary Japan Small Group Tour

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours within Japan and beyond into Asia. We explore Japan's natural beauty, its ancient and Imperial heritage with the contemporary overlay, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of Japan, designed for



Contemporary Japan | Small Group Tour

<https://www.odysseytraveller.com>

23-Apr-2024

the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

Odyssey Traveller's **Contemporary Japan** small group tour will take you through modern life in this East Asian jewel. This contemporary tour is an expedition through Japan's major urban areas, home to a staggering 91.6 percent of the country's population.

Our escorted tours begin and end in Japan's tantalising capital, Tokyo. For the first 12 days we get our fill of Tokyo fashion, technology, culture, and sights.

With Japan's long history reflected in the list of World heritage sites, ancient traditions such as Forest bathing and shoguns sit side-by-side with fast-paced urban living, and so we spend time as well in the ancient capital of Kyoto, exploring its gardens and temples. We visit the coastal city of Shimoda and spend a day on the art island of Naoshima.

Contemporary Japan Small Group Tour Itinerary

Tokyo

For most people, Tokyo is synonymous with Japan, the city's neon-lit skyscrapers, quirky fashion, cherry blossom and efficient bullet trains the first images that often come to mind. The Greater Tokyo Area is the most populous metropolitan area in the world with 37 million inhabitants. Our Tokyo tour weaves through its busy streets to discover its bright spots and unusual corners.

Highlights include a walking tour of Ginza, Tokyo's commercial heart, famous for its elegant streets and upscale shopping, dining and entertainment offerings; sushi breakfast in Tsukiji, the largest fish market in the world; a jaunt in Harajuku, centre of Tokyo's youth culture and an international fashion destination; and a shopping stop in Akihabara, the headquarters of everything related to electronics, anime,



and manga.

We will take a break from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo by visiting the National Arts Centre, the Imperial Palace Gardens, the beautiful Imperial Shinto Shrine, and Ueno Park. We will also have a chance to explore the nearby city of Yokohama.

Shimoda

Shimoda is a picturesque coastal city in the south of the Izu Peninsula, iconic for being the landing place of Commodore Perry's ships in 1854, which marked the end of Japan's long period of isolation (*Sakoku*) and the beginning of diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan. Shimoda is famous among tourists for its beaches and hot springs, and we will enjoy a day of pampering here surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and bright green forests.

Kyoto

Kyoto was Japan's capital for more than a thousand years, and was instrumental in shaping Japan's unique identity and traditions. We will visit its gardens and temples, including the famous Kinkakuji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion as the structure's top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. We will also visit former shogun residences, such as the Nijo Castle and Ninomaru Palace. We will enjoy a special Kyoto-style dinner with a performance by a maiko (an apprentice geisha).

Naoshima

The final stop of the tour before heading back to Tokyo is the island of Naoshima. We will be staying at the island's top-level accommodation, Benesse House, a resort hotel and a modern art museum rolled into one, perched on a hill overlooking the sea.

You can learn more about [Japan](#) with Odyssey's country profile where all other tour departures are listed as well. We also listed [10 great books about Japan](#)



you might be interested in reading.

For more details about this tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

Articles about Japan

The following list of articles are either published by Odyssey Traveller or are carefully selected external sources to maximise senior traveller's knowledge and enjoyment of Japan when visiting:

- [A history of Tokyo](#)
- [Shoguns of Japan](#)
- [Around the world in six coffees](#)
- [Forest bathing in Japan](#)
- [Celebrating the Cherry Blossom; Hanami](#)
- [Travel tips for travellers to Japan](#)
- [Japan's UNESCO World Heritage sites](#)
- [Japan by Marianna Zanetta; travel tips and advice](#)
- [Story of Modern Japan; Dr. Christopher Harding](#)

Tour Notes

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

Highlights



1. See the luxury flagship buildings along Omotesando and Ginza, designed by a who's who of today's architects.
2. Explore the painstakingly manicured Japanese gardens of the Nezu Institute of Fine Arts and Shinjuku Koen park.
3. Admire the perfect symbiosis of nature, contemporary art, and architecture on Naoshima, a beautiful island in the Inland Sea.
4. Gaze over Shimoda Bay, where the Americans arrived in 1854, ending centuries of isolation.
5. See new fashion trends created before our eyes in Harajuku and Shibuya in Tokyo.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Upon arrival make your own way to the hotel. In the evening we meet for a welcome dinner.

Accommodation:

12 nights at The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 2

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Recent key developments in the entertainment district are the city-within-the-city phenomenon. We explore the Roppongi Hills and MidTown projects. The Tadao Ando designed 21/21 Design Sight Pavilion and Tokyo's largest gallery, National Arts Centre, are taken in our stride. Established in January 2007, the National Art Centre, Tokyo, has a total of 14,000 square metres of exhibition space, the largest in Japan. We will have dinner at the National Arts Centre's Brasserie Paul

Bocuse Le Musee (French cuisine).

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 3

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

We have a coach tour of the Hibiya where we visit the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Imperial Hotel Bar and the Diet (Parliament) areas, as well as a stroll in the Imperial Palace Gardens. We will learn the story of Marunouchi through the ages and its role as Tokyo's Wall Street today, crowned by a walk through the painstakingly restored historic Tokyo Station. Lunch and dinner will be at local restaurants.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Today, we will tour Ginza, the commercial heart of Tokyo for 500 years. For early risers, we have a sushi breakfast in Tsukiji, the largest fish market on the planet. We start at Nihonbashi, the once-iconic bridge between the working class quarters in the east and the aristocratic compounds in the west. We make our way west through the glittering department stores and flagship presences of international luxury brands, ending in one of the futuristic skyscrapers of Shiodome with the best view over Tokyo Bay. We will have lunch and dinner at a local restaurant in the area.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 5

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Shibuya is a live fashion laboratory. We walk through the narrow lanes of Jingumae, the prestigious Omotesando, also known as the Tokyo Champs Elysées, and Harajuku, an area famous all over the world for its kinky style and over-the-top boutiques. Fortunately we will have a spiritual break at the beautiful Imperial Shinto Shrine, in the middle of an urban forest. Lunch will be at a local restaurant in Shibuya and dinner will be at a local restaurant in Omotesando.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

We will immerse ourselves in traditional culture at the cool Nezu Institute of Fine Arts, where ancient Japanese arts and craft meets the cutting edge design from architect grandee Kengo Kuma. To top this all off, we will take a stroll through one of the most intricate Tokyo gardens surrounding the institute. We spend the afternoon in the exclusive Aoyama area with outstanding design and interiors from Herzog de Meuron, Tadao Ando, and other architects. Lunch will be at a café in Nezu Institute of Fine Arts (western café food) and dinner at a local restaurant in Aoyama.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Today we will experience serenity in a Tokyo garden and have an electronics overdose. We have a preview of the latest trends in the

burgeoning contemporary arts scene of Tokyo. Forget the pace of the city in the sublime traditional Korakuen garden. In the afternoon we get lost in Akihabara, also known as Electric Town, Tokyo's epicentre of electronic gadgetry and the Otaku (Nerd) lifestyle. To round off the day we discover the latest avant-garde galleries in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa. Lunch will be at the garden's rest area, Kanttokutei (traditional Japanese lunch) and dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Ueno Park is surrounded by a string of national museums. We will pick one according to the group's preference and the thematic temporary exhibitions of the moment. Asakusa is one of the more typical older residential neighbourhoods comprising an ancient temple complex. We will have a picnic lunch at Ueno Park. Dinner will be at a local restaurant in Asakusa.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

We will have a coach tour of the posh residential districts, where most tourists never go. Hiroo, Azabu, Shoto, Daikanyama, and Naka Meguro will have no secrets for us anymore. We might even spot a black Yakuza Mercedes. Lunch will be at a local restaurant in one of these suburbs. We will mingle with international Tokyo creatives at a Pecha Kucha evening, where they visually present their latest ideas with a

drink in hand. We enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

We will get lost in the planet's busiest railway interchange, then recover in the Shinjuku Gardens with an achingly beautiful Japanese section. In the afternoon, we dive into the labyrinth of the Manga/Cartoon community in the Nakano suburb. Lunch will be at a local restaurant in Shinjuku, and dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Our last day in Tokyo is a tour on the aerial train, over the Rainbow Suspension Bridge to the futuristic Odaiba area, on a landfill in Tokyo Bay. Accordingly there are several museums and exhibitions focusing on the future of technology. Lunch and dinner will be at a local restaurant in Odaiba.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

We have a full-day coach tour of Yokohama, which is right next to the Tokyo metropolis. It is one of the largest ports in the world through

where many of Japan's exports pass. We will see the impressive ports infrastructure and also the historic area where the first foreigners were allowed to settle as of the 1870's. Lunch and dinner today will be at a local restaurant in Yokohama.

Accommodation:

The B Roppongi or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Shimoda

Overview:

We take a train from Tokyo to Shimoda for a well-deserved break on the picturesque, mountainous Izu Peninsula, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. Lunch will be on the way to Shimoda on the train or at a local restaurant in Shimoda. We will stroll through the historic small town where the first foreigners arrived in Japan by sea on May 25th, 1854 after 250 years of self-imposed isolation.

Our accommodation features western rooms including breakfast (set menu) and dinner (set menu or barbecue depending on weather) daily. Garden Villa Shirahama is a pension-type hotel, situated in south of Izu Peninsula, a 7-minutes walk to the well-known Shirahama Beach. Surrounded by clear blue ocean and bright green nature, we will have the pleasure of experiencing the hospitality of the owner family.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Garden Villa Shirahama or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Shimoda

Overview:

We have the whole day at leisure. For those who are interested, Oyokocho Dori offers 9 different foot and hand baths free of charge. Alternatively, we can also visit the onsen ryokans and experience their thermal baths. (Depending on which ryokan we visit, it will cost anywhere from JPY500 to JPY1000 which is AU\$8 – 15 equivalent per person which is payable directly at the ryokan. Please bring your own

towels.)

Accommodation:

Garden Villa Shirahama or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Kyoto

Overview:

We travel to Kyoto today by catching the local train and then express train. Although this tour focuses on the contemporary in Japan, the ancient historic capital Kyoto is too iconic to ignore! Lunch will be a bento boxed lunch on the train. Dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

4 nights at Kyoto Royal Hotel and Spa or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Kyoto

Overview:

We have a whole day for sightseeing in Kyoto, visiting the gardens and temples of Kyoto. First we visit Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji). Rokuon-ji Temple was originally built as a villa by Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. It was converted into a temple after Yoshimitsu's death. This temple is famous in both Japan and abroad as a symbol of Kitayama culture. The Kinkaku, or "Golden Pavilion," was built as the Shariden. Covered with gold, the image of the pavilion, which stands at the edge of Kyokochi pond, is reflected in the water. Major repair work performed in 1987 has further enhanced its brilliance.

We will also visit the Silver Temple (Ginkakuji). Built by Ashikaga Yoshimasa as a mountain villa in 1482, Jishoji Temple was later converted into a temple. With its simple, noble design, it is a National Treasure. It is also as Kannon-dono (Kannon Palace). Togudo (Budda Hall), also a National Treasure, is a relic of early shoin-zukuri, or library style. In the garden designated as a special place of scenic beauty) are the so-called "Sea of Silver Sand" and the "Moon Platform," from which

the light of the moon is said to reflect and shine on the Silver pavilion.

Lunch and dinner at a local restaurant in Kyoto.

Accommodation:

Kyoto Royal Hotel and Spa or equivalent.

Day 17

Locations: Kyoto

Overview:

We have another day of sightseeing in Kyoto. Our first stop is Kiyomizu Temple. Established in 778, this temple has continuously attracted worshippers from among the populace since the Heian Period as “Kiyomizu-Kannon.” The temple contains structures from the 15th to 17th centuries, including the Jishu-Jinja Shrine. The Main Hall (Hondo), built in the “stage” style, is noted for its beautiful background scenery which changes with the 4 seasons – including the cherry blossoms and greenery of spring, and the leaves of autumn. Built atop a precipice, the main hall, which is a National Treasure, is famous as the “Kiyomizu Stage” - affording a magnificent view of the city below. The temple precincts contain 15 buildings designated as Important Cultural Properties, including the inner Temple (Okunoin), Amida Buddha Hall (Amidado), and the 3-tiered pagoda.

Next we will visit Nijo Castle, which was constructed in 1603 as the residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Ninomaru Palace (a National Treasure), built in the shoin-zukuri (library-style) of samurai of the Momoyama Period, contains gorgeous paintings on the walls and sliding doors. It was here that the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, restored the emperor to his ancient seat of power in 1867. Located at the site of the former Honmaru Palace and destroyed by fire in the 18th century, is the actual Honmaru Palace (an important Cultural Property), which was moved from the former Katsura-no-Miya Palace of the Imperial Palace, preserving the dignity of the original detached palace.

Lunch and dinner will be at a local restaurant in Kyoto.

Accommodation:

Kyoto Royal Hotel and Spa or equivalent.

Day 18

Locations: Kyoto

Overview:

We have a whole day free at leisure. We recommend a visit to the Miho Museum, which is located southeast of Kyoto, Japan, near the town of Shigaraki, in Shiga Prefecture. The museum was the dream of Mihoko Koyama (after whom it is named), the heiress to the Toyobo textile business, and one of the wealthiest women in Japan. The Miho Museum houses Mihoko Koyama's private collection of Asian and Western antiques, as well as other pieces with an estimated value of between US\$300 million to US\$1 billion. There are over 2,000 pieces in total, of which approximately 250 are displayed at any one time. We will enjoy a special Kyoto-style dinner with a performance by an apprentice Geisha (Maikos).

Accommodation:

Kyoto Royal Hotel and Spa or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Naoshima

Overview:

We travel to Naoshima today by catching trains and ferries. Lunch will be taken enroute to Naoshima.

Our accommodation for the next 2 nights is Benesse House. The main attraction of the Benesse House is its modern art museum, located on a hill overlooking the sea. This museum displays work created by many different artists from both Japan and abroad, that was inspired by the natural surroundings of Naoshima and the architecture on the island. Overnight guests staying at the Museum and Oval buildings can enjoy 24-hour access to the museum.

The Benesse House has other facilities including restaurants, cafes, shops, and a spa that are open to staying guests as well as day visitors. Hotel guests have the added privileges of exclusive restaurants and

after-hours access to the museum.

We will stay in western twin rooms with breakfast and dinner daily. The Benesse House is on the southern coast of Naoshima Island. The complex is the centrepiece of the Benesse Corporation's art facilities on the island and consists of 4 buildings: the Museum, Oval, Park, and Beach, all designed by star architect Ando Tadao. Each building features its own unique artwork and guest rooms.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Benesse House.

Day 20

Locations: Naoshima

Overview:

We have a whole day at leisure at Naoshima. Be surprised by the works of Nikki de St. Phalle, James Turrell, Walter de Maria and other international artists, and how they are integrated in the beautiful nature of Naoshima Island.

There is an opportunity to visit neighbouring islands such as Teshima or Inujima.

Accommodation:

Benesse House or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Takamatsu to Tokyo

Overview:

Today we travel by ferry to Takamatsu. From there, we board our flight to Tokyo where our tour concludes. It is expected we will be back at Tokyo airport by 18:00 pm.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 20 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 20 breakfasts, 17 lunches, and 20 dinners.
- All excursions, sightseeing, and entrance fees as per the itinerary.
- All rail travel on the bullet train, express trains, and local services.
- Modern, air-conditioned coaches throughout and other modes of transport as per the itinerary.
- Domestic flight from Takamatsu Airport to Haneda Airport (Tokyo).
- Program leader for the duration of the tour.
- Detailed preparatory material.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.