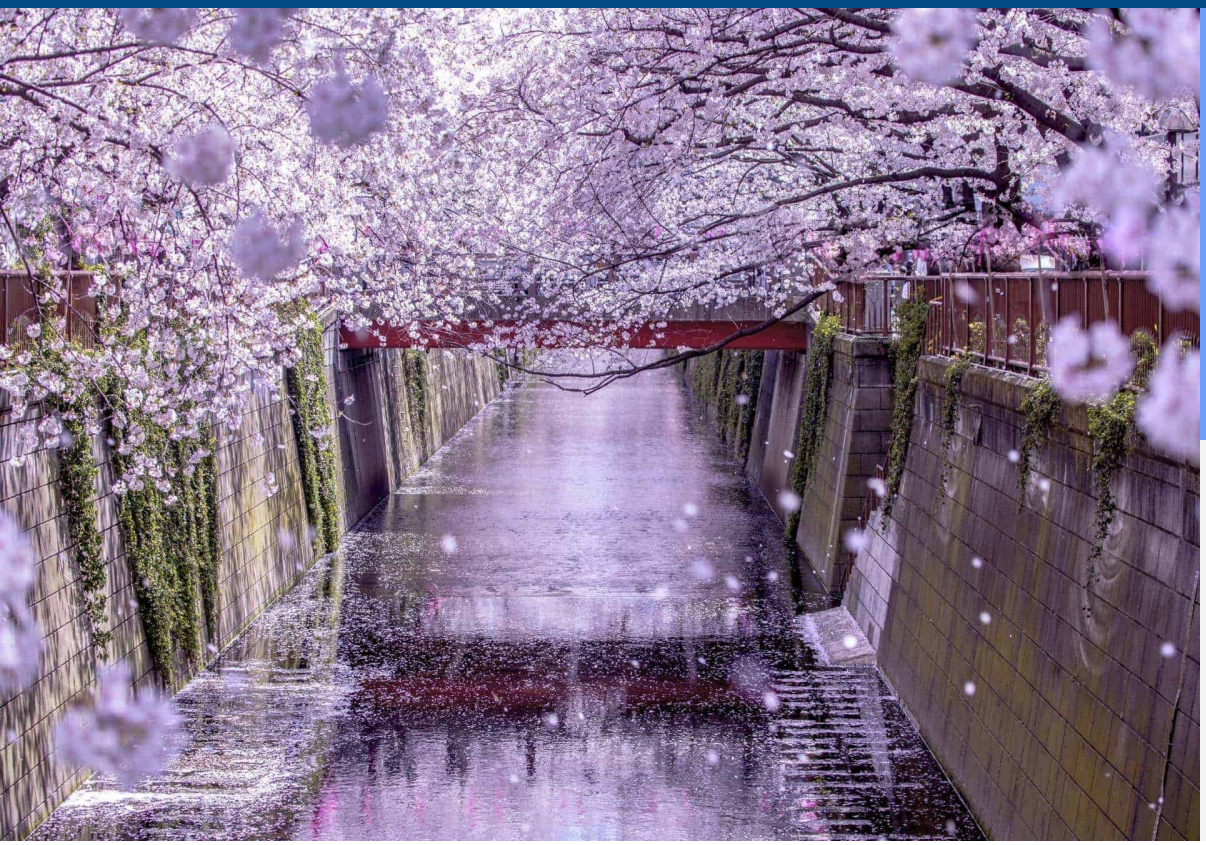
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Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Japan Odyssey – Small Group Tours for Mature Travellers

Sep 02 2024 to Sep 13 2024



Escorted Small Group Tour Japan

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Japan. We explore Japan's fairy-tale natural beauty, its ancient history, and Imperial heritage, 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 the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people

.







Odyssey Traveller's escorted small group tour Japan are small group tour packages that will take you from Japan 's imperial city of Kyoto to the neon-lit capital of Tokyo , tracing more than 2,000 years of history and culture of the Land of the Rising Sun with a knowledgable tour leader. The first departure each year of this Japan tour is timed to allow the traveller whether a couple or single traveller to visit Japan during Hanami or Cherry blossom season.

Japan now has the world's third largest economy following the country's remarkable post-war expansion, and the Japaneseenjoy the highest life expectancy in the world (81 years for men and 87 years for women, as of 2018). A modern, highly industrialised country, Japan is still heavily influenced by the legends and myths from its imperial history, to Shoguns , as can be seen in its art, architecture, literature, and traditions.

On this Japan Odyssey escorted tour, we will be led by our English-speaking guides as we learn about Shintoism and Buddhism, visit ancient temples and new, shinto shrine and other UNESCO World Heritage Sites, admire the country's natural scenery, understand the concept of forest bathing on spiritual well being and immerse ourselves in the cultural experience including Japanese cuisine that define Japanese culture on a guided tour of Japan.

Small Group Tour Japan Itinerary

Experience Traditional Japan in Kyoto

Kyoto, the "thousand-year capital", is synonymous with traditional Japan , evoking images of ancient temples, Shinto shrine(s), geishas in kimonos, the quiet tea ceremony, cherry blossom season , and Zen gardens. Originally named Heian-kyo ("capital of peace and tranquility"), Kyoto became the seat of the imperial court beginning in the year 794 until 1869, when the capital moved to Edo (modern-day Tokyo). Heian-kyo was renamed Kyoto (simply, "capital city") in the 11th century, and retained a lot of its traditional architecture as it was spared from

bombings during World War II.

It is also in Kyoto where Japan formed its identity, veering away from more than a century of Chinese influence and fixation on China's Tang Dynasty. Here they developed their phonetic script distinct from Chinese characters, compiled their own poetic forms, and developed uniquely Japanese themes in their paintings.

While Kyoto (birthplace of videogame powerhouse, Nintendo) has certainly embraced the future, walking through certain parts of the city still feels like stepping into old Japan. On our sightseeing tour, we will visit numerous ancient temples of Buddhists and shrines. Ryoanji Temple and its famous rock garden used to be an aristocrat's villa that was converted into a Zen temple in 1450. This Buddhist temple now belongs to the Myoshin-ji school of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism. Its rock garden is a fine example of kare-sansui ("dry landscape") a Japanese garden design which features rock formations arranged on raked smooth pebbles to facilitate meditation.

We will also visit Kinkakuji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion as the structure's top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. This ancient temple overlooking a pond used to be the retirement villa of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu.

From there we move to Nara , the capital of Japan from 710 to 784. In Nara , we will visit the stunning Todaiji Templeand the beautiful Kasuga Taisha Shrine. We will also spend time in Nara Park with its hundreds of free-roaming deer. If time allows, we will have the opportunity to participate in an authentic Japanese tea ceremony.







Peace and Sacred Scenery in Hiroshima

Moving southwest from Kyoto, we enter Hiroshima, a major urban centre in the 1870s during Japan's imperial period, and a city destroyed in an instant in August 1945 with the dropping of the atomic bomb during World War II. Hiroshima made an impressive recovery after the

war, and is now home to more than two million people.

We will travel from Kyoto to Hiroshima by train, visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, erected in remembrance of the devastation and the lives lost in the bomb attack. The adjacent Peace Park, built near the hypocentre of the blast, is dedicated to the hope of a lasting peace. The moving “Statue of Mother and Child in the Storm” created by sculptor Hongo Shin stands along Peace Boulevard, depicting a mother cradling an infant and lifting another child clinging to her back, expressing the city’s continued advocacy for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. The Peace Park was built around the bombed ruins of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, which is now known as the Genbaku (A-Bomb) Dome and left untouched to serve as a memorial.

We then visit the island of Miyajima (“Shrine Island”) less than an hour off the coast of Hiroshima. Miyajima’s real name is Itsukushima, which Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi (Kukai) established as an ascetic site for the Shingon sect of Buddhism in the 8th Century. In 1643, a Confucian scholar, Shunsai Hayashi, travelled around Japan on foot and called Miyajima one of the “Three Most Scenic Spots in Japan”. His high praise remains accurate. Miyajima is famous for the UNESCO World Heritage site of Itsukushima-jinja, featuring the red torii (shrine gate) which at high tide seems to float on the water.

Our trip to Hiroshima also includes a guided sightseeing tour, by private car, that takes us to Shukkei-en Garden (“shrunken-scenery garden”), a garden replicating the traditional aesthetics of Japanese garden design in miniature, and the magnificent Hiroshima Castle.







The Castle Town of Matsue

From Hiroshima we travel north to Matsue, also known as the “City of Water” as it is near the Sea of Japan, sitting between Lakes Shinji and Nakaumi.

Matsue is a castle town crossed by many canals and has one of the twelve remaining original castles in Japan. As Matsue is a former feudal

stronghold, its buildings and layout reflect its history. We will visit the Adachi Art Museum and gardens to gain an understanding of the art of Japan. For its creator businessman, Adachi Zenko, the Adachi is about finding and appreciating beauty through art, as seen through the tranquillity of the garden or the painted world of the Japanese artist.







The Mountain Resort of Hakone

After Matsue we take a short flight to Haneda, to make a trip to the mountain resort of Hakone, famous for its hot springs resorts (onsen) and breathtaking views of Japan's iconic volcano, Mount Fuji. We spend the day in the Hakone National Park, and at the end of the day there is the opportunity to enjoy a traditional spa package in the hot springs.

This Japan Tour closes with Tokyo

Tokyo is Japan's capital and one of the world's most populous cities. It has been the seat of the Emperor of Japan since 1869 following the Meiji Restoration, and is a bustling centre of fashion, entertainment, gastronomy, and culture. When we first arrive in Tokyo, we have a full day of sightseeing followed by two free days which you can use at your leisure to explore the city. The metro is accommodating for people of all ages, and the signs are in English and Japanese. The diversity of places to visit and experience can easily fill the last two days of this Japan tour package. Your Odyssey program leader and local tour guide (s) will assist you if you need help with planning these last two days. Finally, we come together for a farewell dinner to conclude our small group tour Japan.

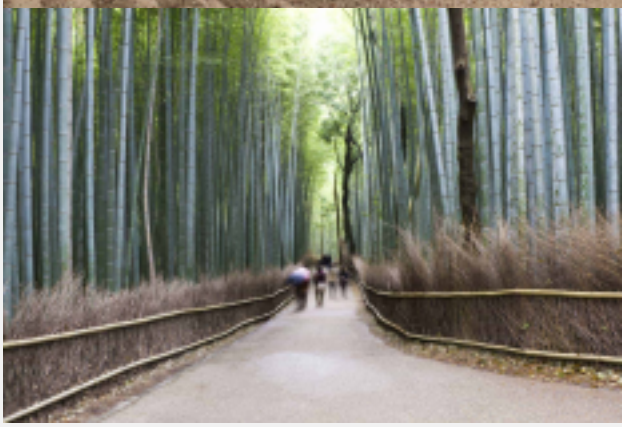
All our Japan group tour(s) include an English-speaking guide to introduce you to the rich heritage of this incredible nation as you discover Japan. Odyssey Traveller's tours of Japan remain very popular. Odyssey has an article with tips about travelling in Japan .

You can learn more about Japan with our country profile where all other tour departures are listed as well. For more details about our guided tour Exploring Japan, 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 from Odyssey.

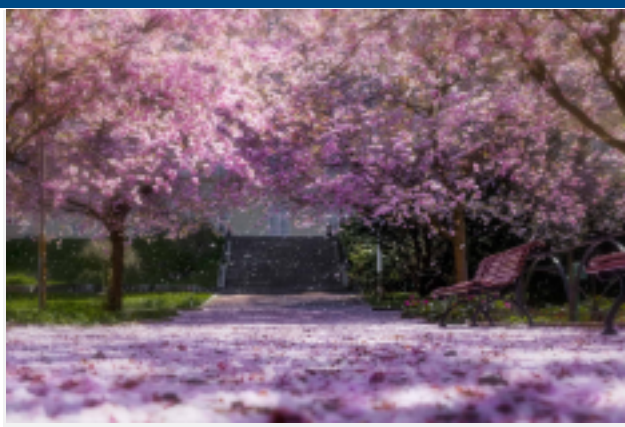
The following list of articles are published by Odyssey Traveller to maximise the senior travellers' knowledge and enjoyment of Japan when visiting:

- A history of Japan
- Astro boy
- 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
- Ten of the best books on Japan

External articles of interest about Japan for the traveller.

The following list of articles are or are carefully selected external source to maximise senior travellers' knowledge and enjoyment of Japan when visiting:

- Japan's UNESCO World Heritage sites
- Japan by Marianna Zanetta; travel tips and advice
- Story of Modern Japan; Dr. Christopher Harding
- Japan's economy miracle a review by HBR



Tour Notes

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.
- Group size is limited to 18.
- On Day 7 our luggage is transported to our Tokyo hotel, therefore you will need an overnight bag for the the two (2) nights spent in Matsue and Hakone.

Highlights

1. Ride the "Shinkansen" (Bullet Train), the world's first high speed train.
2. Discover the icons of Kyoto including the Golden Pavilion and the Heian-Jingu Shrine.
3. Tour Hiroshima and the monuments of the Peace Memorial Park.
4. A trip to Nara, where we will see the deer of Nara park, the Todaiji Temple, and Kasuga Taishi Shrine.
5. A full day tour of Tokyo, including a visit to the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Tower.

Itinerary

Day 1-3

Locations: Kyoto

Overview:

The first day of our small group tour Japan will begin in central Japan in the city of Kyoto with a welcome dinner. For those flying into Osaka, we recommend a coach transfer from Osaka to Kyoto. Odyssey welcomes the opportunity to provide recommendations for transfer arrangements to Kyoto

upon request.

The ancient city of Kyoto was the home of the Emperor for 11 centuries over 1,200 years ago. Numerous temples and shrines of poignant historical beauty in Kyoto display the refined architecture of Japan. Kyoto's legacy of aristocratic art and culture makes Kyoto unique among other cities of Japan. A "heartland" for many Japanese people, Kyoto is the place to encounter the finest essence of traditional Japan.

On our second day in Japan, we will enjoy a sightseeing tour by private car. This includes visits to some beautiful traditional temples, among them the Ryoanji temple, home of a picturesque and famous rock garden, and Kinkakuji Temple, the top two floors of which are covered in gold leaf.

Day three includes a sightseeing tour of Nara, where we visit the stunning Todaiji Temple and the beautiful Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Along with these exquisite buildings, we spend time at Nara park, a favourite spot in the prefecture populated by hundreds of free-roaming deer.

If time allows while in Kyoto, the group will have the opportunity to participate in an authentic tea ceremony.

Accommodation:

3 nights at New Miyako Hotel or similar

Day 4-6

Locations: Hiroshima

Overview:

On the fourth day, after breakfast in Kyoto, we catch a Nozomi train to Hiroshima.

During our stay in Hiroshima, the group will visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), which memorialises the devastation and lives lost in the atomic attack the city suffered in World War II. Peace Memorial Park, which is laid out near the hypocenter of the attack, is dedicated to peace. Here we'll learn about Hiroshima's recovery and growth to become a city with a population of 1.2 million citizens.

We then travel by local train and ferry to visit the sacred island of Miyajima, where roaming deer will welcome us. Miyajima, which means "Shrine Island," has been worshiped since ancient times. The main

entrance to the floating shrine building takes the form of a huge Torii gate floating on the sea. This forested island is well-known to the Japanese as one of the Scenic Trio of Japan.

Our visit to Hiroshima also includes a guided sightseeing tour, by private car, that takes us to Shukkei-en Garden (a garden replicating grand scenery in miniature), and the magnificent Hiroshima Castle.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Hiroshima Oriental Hotel or similar

Day 7

Locations: Matsue

Overview:

On the seventh day we travel from Hiroshima to Matsue.

Matsue, which prospered under the feudal lords in the Edo period (1603-1868), is spotted with traditional Samurai houses. Matsue Castle sits like a tower in the center of a network of waterways including the lake. During the afternoon, we experience the beautifully landscaped garden and carefully curated art collection at the Adachi Museum. We also visit nearby Izumo, a town steeped in legend and myth about the founding of Japan. We will learn about the ancient Izumo Taisha shrine, which enshrines the Kami, the deity of Izumo.

Note: Our luggage will be transported directly to our Tokyo hotel. You will need to arrange an overnight bag to cater for our two nights (Matsue and Hakone) before our arrival in Tokyo.

Accommodation:

1 night at Matsue Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar

Day 8

Locations: Hakone

Overview:

We fly from Izumo Airport to Haneda, and from there we will take a transfer to the foot of Mt Fuji.

From Mt Fuji, we have the opportunity to see the hot springs of Owakudani, the “valley of great boiling.” Hakone is a mountainous resort within the Fuji volcanic chain, and was designated as a National Park in 1938. Soaking in hot springs is a well-loved activity in Japan, and visitors can experience the hot springs in Hakone while enjoying the view of Mt. Fuji, which is considered to be the most beautiful and sacred mountain in Japan. From the hot springs, we will also enjoy the view of Lake Ashi, which is a typical caldera lake formed between the outer crater ridge and inner volcanoes.

We will return to the our hotel in Hakone to enjoy dinner.

Accommodation:

1 night at Yumoto Fujiya Hotel or similar

Day 9-11

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

On the ninth day, we travel to Tokyo to for a full sightseeing day.

The capital of Tokyo is the centre of population, politics, finance, and culture in Japan. Approximately 12 million people reside within Tokyo, and almost one-fourth of Japan’s total population lives within commuting distance of the city. Historically, Tokyo was the centre of the feudal government of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Popular Japanese traditions such as Kabuki, Sumo wrestling, and ukiyo-e woodblock prints became popular and flourished in ancient Tokyo.

On a guided tour of Tokyo, we will see the iconic Tokyo Tower and the Imperial Palace, the Emperor’s residence, as well as having the opportunity to visit the buzzing Nakamise shopping street.

You will have days 10 and 11 of the tour free to explore Tokyo at your leisure, and your Odyssey program leader can show you some of the

sights of this amazing city. On the final evening, the group will enjoy a farewell dinner.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Hotel Unizo Tokyo or similar

Day 12

Locations: Tokyo

Overview:

Our tour will end in Tokyo after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 10 nights of accommodation.
- Daily Japanese and/or Western buffet style breakfasts and 3 dinners.
- 1 internal flight and taxes.
- Shinkansen (Bullet Train) from Kyoto to Okayama, Okayama to Hiroshima.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach (short distance transfers may include be by taxi).
- Gratuities and service charges.
- Detailed preparatory material.
- Services of a tour leader and translator/guide.

What's not included in our Tour

- Comprehensive travel insurance.

- International airfares and taxes.
- Items of a personal nature, such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Optional activities that are suggested during free time, such as Kabuki theatre.

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.