SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Best of Japan (2027)

15 Days / 14 Nights

Best of Japan (2027)

Tour Overview

More than any other country, the Japanese have managed to integrate ancient traditions and bleeding-edge technology harmoniously into their daily lives. With the perfect mix of new and old and our most popular itinerary, this well-rounded tour has something for everyone. In this excellent introduction to the Best of Japan, you won't miss anything the first-time visitor to Japan should see.

Destinations

Tokyo, Shuzenji Onsen, Mt Fuji, Koya-san, Osaka, Himeji, Miyajima Island, Hiroshima, Kurashiki, Naoshima (Optional Tour), Kyoto, Fushimi, Tokyo (Optional Morning and Afternoon Food Tour), Nara (Optional Tour)

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion
★★★★★

Pace
★★★☆☆

Physical Activity
★★★☆☆

Tour Details

In the Best of Japan tour, our most popular itinerary, you'll enjoy a colorful mix of large cities like Tokyo and Osaka, historical Kurashiki, the ambiance and solitude of Miyajima Island, the religious center of Koya-san, the ancient shrines and temples of Kyoto, the testament to peace of Hiroshima, the laid-back atmosphere of Shuzenji Onsen, and the thermally-heated mineral water baths at an onsen and much, much more.

You'll stay overnight at a mountaintop Buddhist temple where Buddhist monks will serve you meals of shojin ryori (the traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine), and you will attend prayer services at the temple early the next morning. Climb to the top of a samurai castle, participate in a tea ceremony, meet a "maiko" (geisha-in-training) face-to-face, see where the geisha live and work, visit the beautiful and quiet Miyajima Island, admire sacred Mt. Fuji (weather permitting), the icon of Japan and enjoy four gourmet Kaiseki-style dinners and one shojin-ryori Buddhist vegetarian meal, and much, much more.

Tour Highlights	✔ Overnight at Buddhist temple and morning prayer service ✔ "Meet a Maiko" session (a Maiko is a Geisha in training) ✔ Overnight on Miyajima Island ✔ Overnight at an Onsen with naturally heated mineral waters ✔ Tea Ceremony ✔ Four "Kaiseki" style dinners ✔ 3 Shojin-ryori meals (Buddhist vegetarian) ✔ Seven separate rides on a Shinkansen (bullet train)
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Preferred Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Reserved seat train tickets where applicable ✔ Meeting service at the arrival airport ✔ Sending service to the appropriate train station ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
Tour Exclusions	✖ Airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map

Tour Destinations

Tokyo
Shuzenji Onsen
Koya-san
Osaka
Himeji
Miyajima Island
Kurashiki
Naoshima Optional Tour
Hiroshima
Kyoto
Nara (Optional)

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met at Tokyo's Narita Airport by a Samurai Tours meeting staff member. They will then purchase a limousine bus ticket for you and help you board the bus to the hotel. After checking in, the evening is free. No meals are included.

Travel: 1-1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 2 Tokyo – Tokyo Skytree, Ginza, Asakusa

After breakfast, you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. Next, the licensed, English-speaking guide will escort you to the Tokyo Skytree for a birds-eye view of Tokyo. Next we will travel to the nearby Asakusa area. Here we will tour the Nakamise-dori, Senso-ji Buddhist Temple and the Asakusa Shrine where you will learn about Buddhist and Shinto Japanese religious practices. Afterwards, we will travel to the famous Ginza district. The Ginza is recognized by many as one of the most luxurious shopping districts in the world, attracting visitors and regulars alike from across the globe. We will return to the accommodations, where we will go through the train tickets for the rest of the tour. Breakfast at the accommodations and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 3 Free Day in Tokyo; Travel to Shuzenji Onsen

Today is a free day to enjoy the world-class city of Tokyo. Go shopping for that perfect souvenir, visit the Meiji Shrine dedicated to the Japanese emperor of the 19th century, or wander through the trendy Shibuya or Harajuku districts where you will more than likely see interesting and far-out fashions. At a pre-determined time and place, the group will meet to travel to Shuzenji Onsen. Shuzenji Onsen (□□□□□) is one of the oldest and most famous hot spring resort towns on the Izu Peninsula. Located in the hilly center of the peninsula, Shuzenji Onsen was named after Shuzenji Temple at the town center. Kobo Daishi, one of Japan's most important religious persons, founded the temple about 1200 years ago. The onsen is famed for its peaceful atmosphere and contemplative setting. Shuzenji Onsen has long been popular with writers, artists and intellectuals seeking solitude to help them channel their creative energy. Before leaving Tokyo, you will prepare your luggage to be transferred to Hakone, and will be traveling to Hakone with an overnight bag only. You should prepare your overnight bag with enough items for 2 days and 1 night.

Walkin g: TBD; Travel: 1 1/2 Hours

Day 4 Hakone - Mt Fuji Observatory; Tour of Shuzenji Onsen

After breakfast, we will take a bus to the nearby Mt. Daruma where we will get an excellent view of Mt Fuji (weather permitting). After returning to the onsen, we will participate in a walking tour of the onsen. The grave of Minamoto no Yoriie (1182-1204), the second Kamakura shogun, can be found at the onsen. He was imprisoned in Shuzenji for the apparent crime of intelligence—such was his reputed brilliance that others felt threatened by him. He was assassinated shortly after the banishment. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 45 minutes; Walking: Heavy

Day 5 Travel to Koya-san; Overnight at a Buddhist Temple

We will travel to Koya-san with overnight bags only. The rest of the luggage will be delivered to our hotel in Osaka where we will be staying the following night. You will need to prepare your overnight bags for 2 days and 1 night. We board a Shinkansen bound for Osaka, and continue to Koya-san by subway, train and funicular. Koya-san is the world headquarters of the Shingon school of Esoteric Buddhism. Kobo Daishi, considered by many to be the most influential religious person in Japanese history, established a religious community here in the year 816. After checking into our shukubo (Buddhist temple lodging), you are free to roam and visit one of the 110 temples in the area or just rest in the garden at the shukubo. Your dinner of shojin-ryori (traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine – no meat, fish, onions or garlic) will be served by the Buddhist Monks from the temple. Breakfast at the ryokan and shojin-ryori dinner at the temple are included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 6 Koya-san – Morning Prayer Service, Okunoin Cemetery and Temple, Garan Temple Complex; Travel to Osaka

Very early in the morning, we attend o-inori (Buddhist prayer service). Afterwards, a shojin-ryori breakfast is served. Following this meal, we wander through the huge cemetery leading up to the Okuno-in temple. Kobo Daishi is buried at this temple, and many Japanese still believe that Kobo Daishi is not dead, but merely in a very advanced state of meditation, waiting to awaken at the appropriate time. After touring the Garan Temple complex, we will stop for a Shojin-ryori lunch. After lunch we will return to the Namba Station the same way we came to Koyasan. After returning to Osaka and picking up our luggage and checking into our hotel, the evening is free to visit the Dotombori-dori and the Namba Districts (South Osaka), the nearby nightlife and restaurant district. While there, you can visit the Ebisu-bashi bridge, which will make you feel like you stepped into the movie “Blade Runner.” Shojin-ryori breakfast at the temple and Shojin-ryori lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Day 7 Travel to Himeji; Himeji - Himeji Castle; Travel to Miyajima Island

Before leaving in the morning you will need to prepare your overnight bag for 1 days/1 night and bring it with you to the lobby of the hotel. We will then travel by subway and Shinkansen to the city of Himeji. Here we will visit Himeji Castle. Built about 400 years ago, Himeji Castle is one of the largest and oldest original castles, and is one of only four castles designated as a national treasure and is also designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will continue on to Hiroshima by Shinkansen, where you will eat your bento box lunch previously purchased, and then a local train and ferry to Miyajima Island While the island is crowded and busy during the day, the island transforms into a quiet, and even romantic place. Breakfast and kaiseki dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 8 Miyajima Island – Free Day

The entire day is free to enjoy and relax in the beauty and ambiance of Miyajima Island: ride the cable car to the top of the mountain on Miyajima Island, or visit the Itsukushima-jinja shrine which was built in its present form in 1168. Or just stroll around the island while enjoying grilled oysters and momiji manju (a popular Japanese confection), the island’s specialty. Breakfast and kaiseki dinner at the ryokan included. Miyajima Island is said by the Japanese to be one of the top three scenic places of Japan.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 9 Travel to Hiroshima; Tour Hiroshima – Peace Park and Museum; Travel to Kurashiki

After taking the local train back to Hiroshima, we tour the Peace Memorial Museum and the Peace Memorial Park, which are both sobering monuments to the tragic events on August 6, 1945. Afterwards, we are off to Kurashiki via the Shinkansen and local train. Kurashiki has a preserved canal area that dates back to the Edo Period (1603-1867), when the city served as an important rice distribution center. In fact, the name “Kurashiki” can be roughly translated as “town of storehouses” in reference to the rice storehouses. Many of Kurashiki’s former storehouses have been converted into museums, boutiques and cafes..Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 10 Naoshima Optional Tour or Kurashiki

Today you have the choice of going to Naoshima Island, or staying in Kurashiki for a free day. Naoshima) is an island in the Seto Inland Sea that is known for its contemporary art. The island is also known for its Mediterranean atmosphere, sandy beaches and sunny weather, combined with a laid back, rural feel is a relaxing getaway from Japan’s large urban areas. During the Edo Period (1603-1868), Kurashiki was an important regional trade hub for Japan’s most important commodity, rice. Large quantities of rice from the surrounding area were brought into Kurashiki and stored there in storehouses before being shipped to Osaka and Edo (Tokyo). Because of the city’s importance in the rice trade, Kurashiki was put under direct control of the shogunate, and the city was even named after its many storehouses (kura). Canals were built to allow boats and barges to navigate between the city’s storehouses and the nearby port. A central section of the city’s former canal system has been preserved in the Bikan Historical Quarter. The weeping willow trees that line the canal and the stone bridges that cross over the water make for a picturesque scene. Along the canal, there are many of the original storehouses that were so central to the city’s identity. Recognizable by their white walls and black tiles, the former storehouses have been converted into cafes, boutiques, souvenir shops and a number of museums: Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 11 Travel to Kyoto, Tour Arashiyama

After breakfast, we will travel by local train and Shinkansen to Kyoto. After dropping off the luggage at the hotel, and stopping for lunch, we will visit the Arashiyama area. Arashiyama is a pleasant district in the western outskirts of Kyoto. The area has been a popular destination since the Heian Period (794-1185), when nobles would enjoy its natural setting. Here we will visit Tenryuji Tenryuji was founded in 1339, and is one of Kyoto’s UNESCO World Heritage sites. We will also visit the famous bamboo garden. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 12 Kyoto – Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Nishiki Koji, Cultural Afternoon: Tea Ceremony

After breakfast, we will start the day at the Nijo Castle. Built in 1603, it was the Kyoto home of Tokugawa Ieayasu, the first Tokugawa Shogun. The ostentatious style of construction was intended as a demonstration of Ieyasu’s prestige, and to signal the demise of the emperor’s power. The finest artists of the day filled the castle with delicate transom woodcarvings and paintings by the Kano School on sliding doors. One of the castle’s most intriguing features is the

so-called “nightingale” floors. To protect the Shogun from real or imagined enemies, these floorboards creak when stepped on. Next we will visit Kinkaku-ji. Kinkaku-ji, also known as the Golden Pavilion, is one of Kyoto’s, as well as Japan’s, most recognizable attractions. The gleaming building covered in gold leaf seems to float on the aptly named Mirror Pond, especially on a sunny day. After lunch you will have some free time at Nishiki Koji. Nishiki Koji is a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. Known as “Kyoto’s Kitchen”, this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi. Following this free time, we will participate in an authentic tea ceremony. The regimented discipline of the tea ceremony has been practiced for more than 400 years, and at one time was considered mandatory for Samurai as an aid to train the mind. Later, we will return to the ryokan. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 13 Fushimi – Fushimi Inari Shrine; Kyoto - Higashiyama District, Yasaka Shrine, Gion Geisha District, Meet a Maiko Session

Before leaving for the day, you will need to prepare your main luggage to be sent forward to the airport. If you would prefer to keep your luggage, you can do so. If you will be sending the luggage, you will need to keep enough items for three days/two nights. The luggage transfer forms will have been provided to you prior to this day, and you are responsible for paying for this transfer. After breakfast, we are off by train to the nearby city of Fushimi, one of the largest sake producing regions of Japan. Here we will visit the Fushimi Inari shrine. This Shinto Shrine, established in the 8th century, is famous for the long tunnels of vermilion torii gates straddling a network of trails leading to the top of the heavily forested Mt. Inari. We will then travel to the Higashiyama District. This area of narrow, cobblestone alleys with its temples, shrines, numerous shops and restaurants is truly enjoyable and relaxing. We will stop for lunch in the Higashiyama District. We will then visit the Yasaka Shrine, also known as the Gion Shrine. This shrine, built over 1350 years ago, is one of the most famous shrines in Kyoto. The shrine’s main hall combines the honden (inner sanctuary) and haiden (offering hall) into a single building. Next, we will walk to the famous Gion Geisha District. Here, you will see where the Geiko (in Kyoto they call themselves Geiko, not Geisha) and Maiko live and work. You may even see one on their way to one of their appointments. Next, we will have an opportunity to meet with a Maiko. The Maiko will perform a short dance, answer questions. and pose for photos with you. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a Japanese restaurant are included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 14 Kyoto – Free Day or Nara Optional Tour, Sayonora Dinner

The morning and afternoon are free. Or Join the optional tour of Nara. After this we will enjoy our Sayonara Dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local Japanese restaurant included.

Travel: 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 15 Return Home

It’s time to say “sayonara” (Goodbye). The group will depart at around 8:00 am unless we have determined you need to leave earlier (in which case you will not be provided sending service). You will be escorted to the Kyoto train station, where you will return on your own to Tokyo’s Narita airport, Tokyo’s Haneda airport or Osaka’s Kansai airport by train. (If you are flying out of Narita or Haneda Airport, be sure to schedule a flight after 15:00 to allow yourself enough time to catch your flight.)

Retrieve your main luggage in the departure lobby of the airport (map in appendix)

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Walking level descriptions:
Light – 0 to 2 miles on level ground
Medium – 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground
Heavy – 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground

Dates & Pricing

Dates	Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person)	Status
Mar 21, 2027 - Apr 4, 2027	¥1,113,361/ ¥144,552	Available
Mar 28, 2027 - Apr 11, 2027	¥1,113,361/ ¥144,552	Available
May 2, 2027 - May 16, 2027	¥1,028,378/ ¥144,552	Available
May 9, 2027 - May 23, 2027	¥1,028,378/ ¥144,552	**Only 1 seat left**
Jun 6, 2027 - Jun 20, 2027	¥938,862/ ¥137,592	Available
Jun 20, 2027 - Jul 4, 2027	¥934,815/ ¥144,552	Available
Jul 4, 2027 - Jul 18, 2027	¥934,815/ ¥144,552	Available
Sep 5, 2027 - Sep 19, 2027	¥951,812/ ¥144,552	Available
Oct 3, 2027 - Oct 17, 2027	¥1,028,378/ ¥144,552	Available
Oct 10, 2027 - Oct 24, 2027	¥1,028,378/ ¥144,552	Available
Oct 24, 2027 - Nov 7, 2027 Fall Foliage	¥1,113,361/ ¥144,552	Available
Oct 31, 2027 - Nov 14, 2027 Fall Foliage	¥1,113,361/ ¥144,552	Available

Add-On Tours

Our tours and tour itineraries are the best, but as the saying goes, “you can’t make everyone happy all of the time”. There may a specific destination or a specific experience you may want to include in your visit to Japan that may not be included your tour. Choose from our Add On tours to include your interests and make your Japan tour even better.

Click HERE **to view all of the Add-On Tours.**

Or, use the arrows to scroll though the recommended list of Add-On Tours for this tour.

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Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a $100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
    - Exact coverage dependent on state
        - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. FL, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
        - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
    - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
        - Up to 69 – $0
        - 70-74 – $100
        - 75-79 – $200
        - 80-84 – $350
        - 85+ – $550
    - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a $100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.

- Reserved seat train tickets where applicable

- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the ryokan in Tokyo
    - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the ryokan in Tokyo
    - Meeting service can only be provided between 8am and 9pm. If you arrive at a time outside of these hours, we will need to provide alternative directions for you to get to the ryokan on your own.

- Sending service to the Kyoto train station and transfer to Tokyo's Narita Airport, Tokyo's Haneda Airport or Osaka's Kansai Airport. (Transfers to Itami Airport are not included)
    - The sending service will escort you to the Kyoto train station and make sure you board the correct train. The sending service will not accompany you to the airport.

For those requiring meeting or sending services on other than the scheduled arrival/departure dates, there will be a $100 fee for the meeting service from the airport into Tokyo or the sending service to the Kyoto train station.)

- Lodging for 14 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels

- Meals
    - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
    - Eight Japanese-style lunches
    - Six Japanese-style dinners (including 2 gourmet kaiseki dinners at the ryokans, and a shojin-ryori – traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine – dinner at a Buddhist temple)

- The appropriate amount of free time to allow you to explore and discover your own personal Japan.
- All transportation costs when traveling with the group. (Transportation costs during scheduled

free times are the tour member’s responsibility.)
- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right. (Itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Use of audio tour guide system (must provide own headphones)
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Shuzenji Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Shuzenji Onsen to Osaka (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Osaka to Miyajimaguchi (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from the Miyajimaguchi to Kyoto (one bag only)

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do’s-and-don’ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions
- Airfare is NOT included.
- A printed itinerary is not included
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Reviews

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at www.samuraitours.com/tours for the most current dates, prices and information.

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MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS
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National Tour Association
Japan National Tourist Organization
JNTO-approved Japan Travel Specialist