SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Best of Japan Alps



15 Days/14 Nights

Best of Japan Alps

Tour Overview

On the Best of Japan Alps tour you will experience soaring mountain peaks, open-air hot springs, lush forests, quaint mountain villages and a slow pace that makes this central alpine area a great escape. Hidden away in its rural and remote valleys are many of Japan's best-preserved post towns, farm hamlets, hot springs and traces of the old urban culture. Combined with its beautiful natural scenery, these features make this area a rewarding place to visit.

Destinations

Tokyo, Magome, Tsumago, Matsumoto, Kamikochi, Shin Hotaka, Takayama, Shirakawago, Kanazawa, Toyama, Tateyama, Nagano, Snow Monkey Park

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

Pace

Physical Activity

Tour Details

The Japan Alps epitomizes the extremes and contradictions of Japan today. The densely populated coastal belt region, including the megalopolis cities of Tokyo and Osaka, is a stark contrast with the beautiful natural scenery of the mountainous central region. Though readily accessible, the Japan Alps are still remote enough to have retained traditional lifestyles and architecture.

The Japan Alps is a slow-paced region that has it all, without the crowds. The castle town of Matsumoto, with its striking “Crow Castle” is sure to please with its numerous 17th-century warehouses. You will feel like you have stepped back into 16th-century Japan in the small, mountain village of Tsumago. The stunningly beautiful mountain valley of Kamikochi has some of the best hiking in Japan. The quaint town of Takayama with its farmer’s markets invites exploration. The old farmhouses at Shirakawa-go will give you a glimpse of the way of life in 17th-century rural Japan. Visit with the famous Japanese Snow Monkeys as they enjoy the outdoor baths.

Tour Highlights	✔ Walk from Magome to Tsumago Along the Nakasendo Highway ✔ Matsumoto Castle ✔ Daio Wasabi Farm ✔ Overnight in Kamikochi Valley ✔ Hirayu Onsen ✔ Norikuradake ✔ Tateyama Alpine Route with Overnight at the base of Mt Tateyama ✔ Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park ✔ Three Separate Rides on Shinkansen (Bullet Train) ✔ Four Kaiseki-style Dinners
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Reserved Seat Train Tickets on all Inter-City Travel ✔ 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	✖ International airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map



Tour Destinations

Tokyo

Magome

Tsumago

Matsumoto

Kamikochi

Hirayu Onsen

Takayama

Shirakawago

Kanazawa

Tateyama

Nagano

Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

After clearing customs and immigration (which can take up to an hour and a half due to increased tourism to Japan), you will be met at Tokyo's Narita Airport by a Samurai Tours meeting assistant. The meeting assistant will then purchase a limousine bus ticket for you and help you board the bus to the hotel. No meals are included.

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

Day 2 Travel to Magome; Overnight Magome

Before leaving Tokyo, you will need to prepare your luggage to transfer to Matsumoto. After breakfast, you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. We start the day by traveling by Shinkansen (bullet train), express train and bus to the city of Magome. Magome and Tsumago were once major stops on the Nakasendo, a major highway through the Japan Alps built in the late 16th century. After the Tokkaido Highway was built in the early 17th century near the coast, Magome, Tsumago and the other towns along this highway became ghost towns. Tremendous efforts have been made recently to rebuild the memory and feel of these old settlements. After arriving in Magome and checking in, the rest of the afternoon is free. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Walk along the Nakasendo to Tsumago; Tsumago - Tsumago History Museum, Wakihonjin Okuya, Honjin; Overnight Tsumago

After breakfast at the ryokan, we will arrange to have our overnight bags delivered from Magome to Tsumago (you will walk with day bags only), and we will walk the 5 miles from Magome to Tsumago along the route of the old Nakasendo highway. The old highway winds through quaint neighborhoods, old forests, along mountain streams and waterfalls as it makes its way to the historic city of Tsumago. There are even sections of the original highway still remaining. (For those who are unable to walk this far, you can take the bus either from Magome to Tsumago, or there is a bus available from the half-way point of the walk to Tsumago.) All of the electrical and utility lines have been removed and placed underground in Tsumago. You will feel like you truly stepped into 17th- century Japan and Tsumago is often used for filming period movies and television shows. First we will tour the Tsumago History Museum where we will learn the fascinating history of Tsuamgo and the surrounding area. Next we will tour the Wakihonjin Okuya where the retainers of the feudal lord's party would stay, and the Honjin, where the feudal lords would stay. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore the picturesque and charming village of Tsumago before checking into our ryokan. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: Heavy

Day 4 Travel to Matsumoto; Matsumoto - Matsumoto Castle

After breakfast at the ryokan, we travel by express train to Matsumoto. From the moment you step off the train and hear the announcement "Matsumotooooo," you will recognize you are someplace special. Matsumoto is unique because of its many beautiful Edo-period (17th-to-19th-century) Kura (warehouses) with their striking black-and-white contrasting latticework. Today these warehouses house restaurants and shops. After lunch, we tour the famous Matsumoto Castle. This beautiful

castle is also known as Crow Castle because of its stark black walls. The castle was first built in 1504 and remodeled into its current form at the turn of the 17th century. Climbing to the top of the main tower, you will have a wonderful view of the city and the surrounding mountains. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations and lunch at a local restaurant included..

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 5 Daio Wasabi Farm; Travel to Kamikochi; Overnight Kamikochi

Before leaving the accommodations, you will need to prepare your main luggage to be sent to Hirayu Onsen. You will be traveling to Kamikochi and Hirayu Onsen with an overnight bag only. You will need to prepare enough items for three days/two nights. In the morning we will visit the nearby Daio Wasabi Farm. Here you can learn more about this Japanese condiment staple, while enjoying the many foods flavored with wasabi including ice cream. The farm is also famous for its river that flows though the farm with many watermills. The river appeared in the 1990 film, Dreams, by Akira Kurosawa in a segment called the “Village of the Watermills.” In the afternoon, we travel to Kamikochi by train and bus along an incomparable scenic route. Kamikochi, in the middle of the beautiful Chubu-Sangaku National Park, is only open from late-April until October because of the almost 30-feet of snow that falls in this area of Japan during the winter. As you approach Kamikochi, the valley opens onto a row of towering mountains, with the icy Azusa River flowing through the middle of the valley. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 6 Kamikochi Free Day

The day is free to relax and enjoy the beauty of Kamikochi. There are numerous gentle trails in the valley, and many trails leading to the surrounding mountains for the more adventurous. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: TBD

Day 7 Shin Hotaka Ropeway, Overnight Hirayu Onsen

After breakfast, we travel by bus to Shin Hotaka Onsen, where, weather permitting, we will enjoy the scenery from the Shin Hotaka Ropeway. From the top of the ropeway at 2,200 meters (about 7,000 feet), you can get a beautiful view of the surrounding Japan Alps. After the ropeway, we will overnight at Hirayu Onsen. Breakfast and Dinner at the ryokans.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 8 Bus to Norikuradake, Travel to Takayama

Before leaving in the morning, we will transfer the main luggage to Takayama. You will travel with overnight bags to Takayama. You will need to prepare enough items for two days/one night. After breakfast, we will continue by bus to Norikuradake, one of the highest mountains in the Northern Alps. And the road is one of the highest in Japan. Later in the afternoon, we will travel by buses to Takayama. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. The rest of the day is free. Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 9 Takayama - Miyagawa Morning Market, Jinyamae Morning Market, Takayama Jinya, Sanmachisuji District, Free afternoon

This morning we stroll through the farmer's markets, sampling the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. After that, we tour the Takayama-jinya, which was the governing office of Takayama and the surrounding area since the early 17th century. The guide will take you to the San-machi-suji district, consisting of merchant homes dating back to the 16th century. For lunch, we will enjoy one of the many nearby Hida Beef restaurants. (Hida Beef is the same thing as the more famous Kobe Beef.) From here the rest of the day is free to roam and explore Takayama. Visit the many temples, shrines and museums, rummage through antique shops, or relax at one of the sake breweries. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 10 Travel to Shirakawago; Shirakawago - Shirakawago Open Air Museum, Observation Deck, Free time; Travel to Kanazawa

Before leaving in the morning, we will transfer the main luggage to Toyama. You will travel with overnight bags to Shirakawa-go, Kanazawa, and Toyama. You will need to prepare enough items for two days/one night. Today we travel to the valley of Shirakawa-go by public bus. Shirakawa-go is the home of many Gassho-zukuri (Praying Hand) style homes, which have been moved here from the surrounding area. These homes were first used as far back as the 18th century and are still being used today. We will tour the Shirakawa-go Open Air Museum where approximately 25 buildings from the surrounding area have been relocated. After visiting the Shirakawa-go Observation Deck, where you will have an opportunity to view the village of Shirakawa-go from above and some free time to explore Shirakawago on your own, we will continue on by another public bus to Kanazawa where we will stay overnight. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 11 Kanazawa - Kenrokuen, Nagamachi Samurai District, Nomura House, Higashi Chaya District, Shima Teahouse; Travel to Toyama

We begin the day touring the Kenrokuen Garden. This garden is considered to be one of the three best gardens in Japan and was initially constructed in the 17th century. After enjoying the garden, we will tour the Nagamachi District. This is the residential district where the samurai who served the nearby castle lived. At the Nagamachi District, we will tour the Nomura House. The Nomura Family was a high-ranking retainer for the Maeda Family, the feudal lord family who ruled Kanazawa and the surrounding area during the Edo Period. Next we will visit the Higashi Chaya district, the largest of the three geisha entertainment districts in Kanazawa. Here we will the the Shima Teahouse, a preserved teahouse converted into a museum. Later in the day, we travel by express train to the city of Toyama, the gateway to Tateyama. We will retrieve our main luggage after checking into the hotel. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 12 Tateyama Alpine Route; Overnight at Tateyama

Before leaving for the day we will transfer luggage to Nagano or the airport. You will need to prepare your overnight bag for 2 days/1 night. We will be traveling by numerous forms of transportation through the Chubu Sangaku National Park. Here you will get a chance (weather permitting) for a view of the Tateyama Mountain Range. You will also have some time to go hiking around the alpine area above the treeline. Here you will not only enjoy the view of the surrounding

mountains but the many alpine flowers as well, or you can just relax and enjoy the view. Breakfast and dinner at the hotel are included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: TBD

Day 13 Tateyama Alpine Route; Travel to Nagano

Today we will finish our travels along the Tateyama Alpine Route. Along the way, you will have opportunities for short walks. In the late afternoon, we will finish our adventure across the Tateyama Mountain Range by taking the bus to Nagano. Breakfast at the hotel and bento box lunch are included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 14 Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park, Zenkoji Temple, Sayonara Dinner

After breakfast, we will travel by bus to the Snow Monkey Park. Here, at the Jigoku-dani (Hell Valley), we will delight in the world famous “snow monkeys” of Japan. The Red-Faced “snow monkeys” are only found in Japan, and during the entire year, the monkeys enjoy using the thermally-heated mineral water baths. We will return by bus to the city of Nagano where we visit Zenkoji, one of the most important and popular temples in Japan. It is said that the first Buddha statue brought to Japan is stored at Zenkoji. The original statue cannot be seen, but a copy of the statue is put on display every six years. The next time it can be seen will be in 2021. The large main hall of the temple was constructed in the early 18th century. After touring Zenkoji, we will return to the hotel before enjoying our Sayonara Dinner. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 15 Return Home

You will be escorted to the Nagano station where you will travel on your own by Shinkansen and express train to Narita Airport to fly home. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 3 1/2 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
Jul 4, 2027 - Jul 18, 2027	$6,559.04/ $865.20	Available
Sep 19, 2027 - Oct 3, 2027	$6,559.04/ $865.20	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.

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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 – $104
    - 75-79 – $180
    - 80-84 – $331
    - 85+ – $545
  - **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.

- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the hotel in Tokyo
  - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the hotel in Tokyo

- Sending service to the Nagano train station and transfer to Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport
  - The sending service will escort you to the Nagano 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 Nagano train station.
- Lodging for 14 nights in western-style hotels or Japanese-style ryokans

- Meals
  - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning(Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
  - Six Japanese-style luncheons including a Hida Beef lunch
  - Seven Japanese-style or western style dinners (including 5 Kaiseki-style dinners)

- 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)
- Electronic version of itinerary

- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right. (itinerary specifics subject to change)

- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour

- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Matsumoto (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Matsumoto to Hirayu Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Hirayu Onsen to Takayama (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Takayama to Toyama (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Toyama to the airport OR Nagano (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 dos-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions

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

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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