SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Best of Shikoku and Kyushu Self Guided



15 Day/14 Nights

Best of Shikoku and Kyushu Self Guided

Tour Overview

Experience more of Shikoku and Kyushu on the Best of Shikoku and Kyushu Self Guided tour. With its mild climate, tranquil gardens, famous hot springs, active volcanoes, historic castles, beautiful countryside, and warm-hearted people, this part of Japan offers a dramatic experience that will create travel memories for a lifetime.

📍 Destinations

Osaka , Tokushima, Megijima, Takamatsu, Konpira, Kochi, Matsuyama, Dogo Onsen, Beppu, Usuki, Kagoshima, Nagasaki, Yoshinoharikoen

Tour Details

The rural mountainous island of Shikoku is the smallest of the four major islands of Japan, and is also the one least visited by foreigners. However, this tranquil island offers elements of traditional Japan that are hard to find elsewhere. For more than 1,000 years, Shikoku has been the focus of “henro” (pilgrims) following in the footsteps of Kobo Daishi (the 9th century Buddhist monk who helped change Japanese religion forever) in their ever-elusive search for enlightenment.

Kyushu, the third largest and southern-most island of Japan, was at one time the most important gateway into Japan for foreigners. But at the same time, according to Japanese legend, it was from Kyushu that the first emperor, Kimmu, began his campaign to unify Japan. Kyushu is therefore considered to be the cradle of Japanese civilization.

You will follow in the footsteps of Kobo Daishi, the 9th century Buddhist monk, and visit numerous important religious centers in Japan including Konpira Shrine, a favorite destination of pilgrims for hundreds of years. Bathe in some of Japan's oldest, most famous and most popular onsens. Climb to the top of one of Japan's largest Samurai castles. Stroll through some of Japan's best gardens, and tour Nagasaki, once the only gateway to Japan for foreigners, and much, much more.

Tour Highlights	✔ Optional Walk along the 88 Temple Pilgrimage ✔ Dogo Onsen (considered one of the oldest Onsen in Japan) ✔ Beppu Onsen, one of the largest Onsen in Japan ✔ Usuki Stone Buddhas ✔ Kochi ✔ Nagasaki
Tour Inclusions	✔ 14 Day JR Rail Pass ✔ Meeting service at the arrival airport ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History ✔ 4 Hours with a guide ✔ Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities ✔ Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging ✔ English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan
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

Osaka

Tokushima

Megijima

Takamatsu

Konpira

Kochi

Matsuyama

Dogo Onsen

Beppu

Usuki

Kagoshima

Nagasaki

Yoshinogarikoen

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Osaka

After clearing Customs and Immigration (which can take up to three hours due to increased tourism in Japan) you will be met at Tokyo's Osaka Kansai Airport by a meeting service. The meeting service will help with your transfer to Osaka. No meals included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours

Day 2 Tour Osaka for 1/2 Day; Travel to Tokushima

After breakfast you will meet with your licensed and local, english speaking guide for a half day tour of Osaka. Weather it's visiting the Osaka Castle, getting in some first class shopping, seeing the famous Ebisubashi Bridge, or exploring stunning local temples, the guide will tailor the itinerary to your tastes. For lunch, we recommend experiencing some of the local ramen Osaka is known for. After lunch the guide will send you on your way and you will be traveling to Tokushima on the island of Shikoku by bus. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours

Day 3 Tour Tokushima; 88 Temple Pilgrimage Optional Tour

In addition to the Awa Odori festival held each year in mid-August, Tokushima is famous as the start and the end of the 88 Sacred Temples Pilgrimage. These 88 temples were founded by Kobo Daishi, one of the most influential Buddhist Monks in Japanese history. The route of this pilgrimage takes one all the way around the island of Shikoku. If you are walking the entire route, as was done for hundreds of years, the pilgrimage would take about two months. Today, tour buses whisk pilgrims around the entire route in about two weeks. Today you can be a "henro" (pilgrim) for a day by following a section of the pilgrimage and visiting a few of the 88 temples on your path to enlightenment. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 4 Travel to Takamatsu; Tour Megijima; Return to Takamatsu

After breakfast, you will travel to Takamatsu on the coast of the Seto Inland Sea. After dropping off your luggage you will take a short ferry to the island of Megijima. Megijima is associated with Onigashima, the Ogre Island from the popular Momotaro legend in which a small boy visited the island to fight its resident ogres. The cave where the ogres lived can be found near the top of the highest mountain. It is thought the cave was created by Chinese pirates nearly a thousand years ago. There is also an observation deck where you can get a commanding view of the surrounding Seto Inland Sea and the numerous small islands in the area. Megijima is also one of the venues for the Setouchi Triennale art festival and features several artwork-turned homes and a few other art pieces on permanent display. Megijima's atmospheric village of old wooden houses and narrow lanes is located around the ferry terminal and is protected by high stone walls. You will return to Takamatsu by ferry where you will stay for the night. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 2 Hoiurs

Day 5 Tour Takamatsu; Konpira Optional Tour

Today is free to tour Takamatsu on your own. We suggest starting the day by touring Ritsurin Koen. This is considered to be one of the most beautiful gardens in Japan, taking more than one hundred years to create. Here you can also take a short break to enjoy green tea and sweets in a peaceful teahouse overlooking a koi-filled pond. Then we suggest you travel to the nearby city of Kotohira. Here you can visit Konpira Shrine, one of Japan's most famous Shinto Shrines. Kompirasan is the main shrine of the multiple Kompira shrines found around Japan that are dedicated to sailors and seafaring. Located on the wooded slope of Mount Zozu in Kotohira, the approach to Kompirasan is an series of 785 stone steps. For many centuries Kompirasan has been revered as a mixture of Shinto and Buddhism, until it was officially declared a Shinto shrine in the beginning of the Meiji Period during government efforts to separate the two religions. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: N/A

Day 6 Travel to Kochi; Tour Kochi

After breakfast you will travel to Kochi on the southern coast of Shikoku. You can visit Kochi Castle, one of only twelve castles in Japan that is still completely intact. Later, we suggest going to Mount Godaisan where you can visit Chikurenji Temple, one of the 88 temples (#31) along the Shikoku Pilgrimage. The temple grounds also contain a beautiful 5-story pagoda. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 3 Hours

Day 7 Tour Kochi

Today is a free day to enjoy Kochi. We recommend visiting Kochi Castle, one of only 12 remaining original castles in Japan. Enjoy beautiful Katsurahama Beach, or explore the covered shopping streets in downtown Kochi. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: N/A

Day 8 Tour Kochi; Travel to Matsuyama; Tour Matsuyama and Dogo Onsen

If today is Sunday we suggest staying in Kochi for the Sunday Morning Market. The Sunday Market is an open-air market that has continued for more than 300 years since the Edo period. The market is held on one lane of a main street which extends all the way from the Otemon main gate of Kochi Castle. It runs from the early morning to evening of every Sunday with about 500 stalls lining the street. If it's not Sunday, we suggest you travel to Matsuyama mid day where you can tour the temple of Ishiteji. This temple is one of the 88 temples (#51) on the Shikoku pilgrimage. Ishiteji is known for its Niomon Gate, a designated national treasure. The main hall and pagoda are also designated important cultural properties, and all of the structures exhibit the typical architecture style of the Kamakura Period (1192-1333). Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 4 Hours

Day 9 Tour Matsuyama and Dogo Onsen; Travel to Beppu

In the morning we suggest touring Matsuyama Castle,one of Japan's most beautiful original castles. It is located on Mt. Katsu, a steep hill in the city center providing visitors to the castle with a bird's eye view of Matsuyama and the Seto Inland Sea. The castle was constructed between 1602 and 1628. The current three-story castle tower was constructed in 1820 after the original five-story one was destroyed by lightning. You will later continue on to the city of Beppu on the island of Kyushu. The city of Beppu is one of the largest, if not the largest onsen (hot springs resort) in Japan. There are thousands of small therapeutic baths with mineral-laden water or

thermally-heated sand baths that can steam, boil, or poach vitality into aching muscles and weary travelers. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 4 Hours

Day 10 Tour Beppu; Usuki Optional Tour

Today is free to tour Beppu on your own. We recommend starting the day by touring the famous Beppu “Hells.” The boiling mud forming concentric circles as it oozes through the ground and the colors of the ponds of this “hell-on-earth” are sure to fascinate and entertain. In the afternoon you have the option of traveling by train to the nearby city of Usuki. Here you will find 60 Buddha statues that were carved into the soft stone cliffs. These statues were carved during 12th to 14th centuries, and have been designated as National Treasures. You will return to Beppu by train. The evening is free to enjoy the hot springs or visit the Takegawara Onsen. Built in 1879, it is Beppu’s most famous onsen and offers both sand and regular hot spring baths in an atmosphere of the past. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: N/A

Day 11 Travel to Kagoshima; Tour Kagoshima

After breakfast you will travel to Kagoshima. We suggest starting your tour of Kagoshima by visiting the Senganen Garden. Senganen Garden is a Japanese style stroll garden located along the coast of Kagoshima Bay. The most striking feature of the garden is its use of Sakurajima and Kagoshima Bay as borrowed scenery. The garden also includes small ponds, streams, shrines and a bamboo cave. The garden was constructed in 1658 by the Shimazu clan, one of Japan’s wealthiest and most powerful feudal clans during the Edo Period. The Shimazu clan ruled the Satsuma domain (present day Kagoshima) for almost 700 years. After the Edo Period, they continued to be influential as some of the earliest adopters of western science and technology. At the center of the garden stands the Iso Residence. After the end of the Edo Period, the Iso Residence became the main residence of the Shimazu family. You can then visit the small Shoko Shuseikan Museum located next to the garden which originally served as one of the earliest western style machinery factories in Japan. Today it contains exhibits about the culture and maritime activities of the Shimizu clan and the early factory and machines which contributed to Japan’s modernization in the 1800s. We recommend continuing your tour of Kagoshima with a visit to Shiroyama Park, located on Mount Shiroyama. The mountain formerly served as the site of Kagoshima Castle (Shiroyama literally translates to “castle mountain”). From the Shiroyama Observatory you can enjoy beautiful views of downtown Kagoshima, Kagoshima Bay, and Sakurajima. Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours

Day 12 Travel to Nagasaki; Tour Nagasaki

Today you will travel by Shinkansen (bullet train) and express train to the city of Nagasaki. After arriving in Nagasaki, we suggest you have lunch and then visit the Dejima area. Dejima was a man-made island in the port of Nagasaki constructed in 1636. A few years later the Dutch trading factory was moved to Dejima. The Dutch workers, the only remaining Westerners allowed in the country, were restricted to Dejima during Japan’s two centuries of isolation. Today Dejima is no longer an island, as the surrounding area had been reclaimed during the 20th century. However, a number of Dejima’s historical structures have been reconstructed, including various residences, warehouses, walls and gates. There are many displays in these buildings documenting the daily life of the Dutch residents. Next, you can tour Glover Gardens. Glover Garden is an open-air museum exhibiting mansions of former western residents of Nagasaki. It is located on the hill where western merchants settled down after the end of Japan’s era of seclusion in the second half

of the 19th century. You can also enjoy a panoramic view of the city from the garden. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours

Day 13 Tour Nagasaki

Today is a free day to enjoy everything Nagasaki has to offer. You can visit the Nagasaki Peace Park and Museum which commemorates the atomic bombing of Nagasaki of August 9, 1945 which destroyed wide parts of the city and killed tens of thousands of inhabitants. The park is home to the massive Peace Statue as well as various other memorials. A monument around a black pillar marks the atomic explosion's epicenter in the nearby Hypocenter Park and stores the name list of the bomb victims. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 14 Travel to Yoshinogarikoen; Tour Yoshinogarikoen; Travel to Osaka

Today you will return to Osaka by express train and Shinkansen (bullet train). Along the way you will stop at Yoshinogarikoen Historical Park. The park contains a reconstructed village of the Yayoi Period (3rd Century BC to 3rd Century AD). Archaeological records were carefully studied to recreate the life and culture from this time. In its day, the original village was one of Japan's largest. After touring the park you will travel to Osaka where you will spend your last night. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: 5 Hours

Day 15 Return Home

It's time to say "sayonara" (goodbye) to Japan. You will take the express train to the Kansai International Airport, just outside Osaka. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours

Dates & Pricing

Low Season-
$3,494.00 (per person, based on double occupancy)
January 6 – February 28
June 16 – August 10
August 19 – August 31
November 16 – December 24

Regular Season-
$3,744.00 (per person, based on double occupancy)
March 1 – March 16
May 7 – June 15
September 1 – October 14

Peak Season-
$3,994.00 (per person, based on double occupancy)
March 17 – May 6 (Cherry Blossom & Golden Week)
August 11 – August 18 (Obon Holiday)
October 15 – November 15 (Fall Foliage)
December 25 – January 5 (New Years)

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Inclusions

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