SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Best of Central Japan



13 Days / 12 Nights

Best of Central Japan

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, the well-rounded Best of Central Japan tour has something for everyone.

Destinations

Tokyo, Hakone, Matsumoto, Kanzawa, Hiroshima, Miyajima Island, Kyoto, Fushimi, Tokyo (Optional Morning Tour of Tsukiji Outer Market), Tokyo (Optional Afternoon Cooking Class)

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

★★★☆☆

Pace

★★★★☆

Physical Activity

★★★☆☆

Tour Details

In the Best of Central Japan tour, you'll enjoy a colorful mix of large cities like Tokyo, quaint and traditional Matsumoto and Kanazawa, the ambiance and solitude of Miyajima Island and the ancient shrines and temples of Kyoto, the testament to peace of Hiroshima, the natural beauty of Hakone, the thermally-heated mineral water baths at an onsen and more.

You'll participate in a tea ceremony, stroll through farmer's markets, see where the geisha live and work, Meet a Maiko (geisha in training), visit beautiful Miyajima Island, soak in the thermally-heated mineral waters at an onsen, admire sacred Mt. Fuji (weather permitting), the icon of Japan and much, much more.

Tour Highlights	✔ Overnight at an Onsen with naturally heated mineral waters ✔ Tea Ceremony ✔ Six separate rides on a Shinkansen (bullet train) ✔ Kenrokuen - Rated as One of Japan's Three Best Gardens ✔ Matsumoto Castle ✔ Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum ✔ Meet a Maiko Session ✔ Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park ✔ View Mt Fuji (weather permitting)
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

Hakone

Matsumoto

Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park

Kanazawa

Hiroshima

Miyajima Island

Kyoto

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. They will purchase a limousine bus ticket for you and help you board the bus to the hotel. No meals 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 Hakone

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 Hakone. Hakone is famous for its natural beauty and the view of nearby Mt. Fuji (weather permitting). Before leaving Tokyo, you will prepare your luggage to be transferred to Matsumoto, and will be traveling to Hakone and Matsumoto with an overnight bag only. You should prepare your overnight bag with enough items for 3 days and 2 nights. Breakfast and dinner at the hotels included.

Walking: TBD; Travel: 1 Hour

Day 4 Tour Hakone- Hakone Ropeway, Lake Ashi Sightseeing Boat

We will be taking many different forms of transportation (electric train, funicular, gondola and bus) around Hakone including the Hakone Sightseeing Boats on Lake Ashi. In good weather, passengers aboard the sightseeing cruise can get a fine view of Japan's most famous peak, Mount Fuji, and enjoy Hakone's rich scenery reflected on the lake's calm surface. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local Japanese restaurant are included.

(PLEASE NOTE: High winds and/or heavy rain can, and will often cause cessation of services on the Sightseeing Boat cruise. Should this occur, we will not be able to operate the itinerary as listed above, and will replace it with the best possible alternative given the weather conditions. Also, in the case of bad weather, even if the boats are still operating, we may alter the itinerary for your comfort and safety as Mt. Fuji will not be visible anyway.) Breakfast and dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 5 Travel to Matsumoto; Matsumoto Castle

After checking out of the ryokan. we will travel by Shinkansen (bullet train) and limited express train to the city of 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. In the afternoon, we will visit the Matsumoto Castle. One of the 12 remaining original castles in Japan, Matsumotojo’s main castle keep and its smaller, second donjon were built from 1592 to 1614. Both these structures were well-fortified as peace was not yet fully achieved at the time. In 1635, when military threats had ceased, a third, barely defended turret and another for moon viewing were added to the castle. Breakfast is included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 6 Matsumoto - Nakamichi, "Frog Street", Free Time

Before leaving the hotel, you will transfer your luggage to Kanazawa. You will need enough items for 2 days and 1 might. We will visit the Nakamachi district. Nakamachi is a small section of Matsumoto’s town center with streets lined by nicely preserved, old buildings. The buildings include a number of warehouse-type buildings (kura) with large white-painted walls. The area is where the city’s merchants used to live during the Edo Period, and today, the types of buildings here reflect this history. Some of the buildings house small shops, restaurants and ryokan.Next we will visit the nearby”Frog Street”, a pedestrian-only lane of shops and cafes housed in small, traditional-style buildings. The street got its nickname in the Meiji Period after the construction of Yohashira Shrine for which it serves as the main approach. Businesses sprung up, allowing people to buy items and return home after worshipping. The two acts sound phonetically identical to the word for frog (kaeru) in Japanese, thus spawning the street’s colloquial label. Today, a frog statue stands at the entrance to the street to protect the businesses.Breakfast is included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: HEAVY

Day 7 Travel to Nagano; Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park, Travel to Kanazawa

After breakfast, we will travel to Nagano. We will store the luggage in a coin locker before traveling to the Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park, home of the world-famous Snow Monkeys. After returning to Nagano, we will continue on to the city of Kanazawa, Kanazawa, located on the northern coast of Japan, was once controlled by one of the wealthiest families in Japan, the Maeda Clan. They were admirers and sponsors of many traditional arts, and these arts flourished under their sponsorship. Many of these arts are still being practiced today in Kanazawa. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Heavy/strong>

PLEASE NOTE: During the warmer months, the snow monkeys often move to the cooler climate in higher forests. When that happens, we will replace the visit to the snow monkey park with Zenkoji temple.

Day 8 Kanazawa - Kenrokuen Garden, Seisonkaku Villa, Nagamachi Samurai District

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 tour the Seisonkaku Villa. After lunch we will tour the Naga-

machi Samurai District. This area of Kanazawa, located at the foot of Kanazawa Castle, was the residential district for the samurai serving the castle. The area preserves a historic atmosphere with its remaining samurai residences, earthen walls, private entrance gates, narrow lanes and water canals. Here, we will also tour the Nomura House. The Nomura family was a high-ranking retainer for the Maeda family. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 1/2 Hour; Walking: Heavy

Day 9 Travel to Hiroshima; Tour Hiroshima - Peace Park and Museum

Before breakfast, bring your luggage to the lobby to be transferred to Kyoto. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After an early breakfast, we will travel to Hiroshima where we will tour the Peace Memorial Museum and the Peace Memorial Park, which are both sobering testaments to the dropping of the A-bomb on August 6, 1945. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 10 Travel to Miyajima Island; Tour Miyajima Island - Itsukushima Shrine, Free Time; Travel to Kyoto

After breakfast, we will travel by local train to the harbor where we will board a ferry for Miyajima Island. Miyajima Island is said by the Japanese to be one of the top three scenic sights in Japan. We will visit the Itsukushima-jinja shrine which was built in its present form in 1168. After some free time on the island, we will return to the mainland and travel to Kyoto. Steeped in history and tradition, Kyoto has in many ways been the cradle of Japanese culture. A stroll through Kyoto is a walk through 11 centuries of Japanese history. For many, just the name of Kyoto conjures up the classic images of Japan: streets of traditional wooden houses, the click-clack of geta (wooden sandals) on the paving stones, geisha in a flourish of brightly colored silks, and a tea master deliberately warming water and making tea. Once you get to Kyoto, you will retrieve your main luggage from the hotel. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 11 Kyoto – Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Nishiki Koji, Tea Ceremony

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 will start the day at the Nijo Castle. Built in 1603, it was the Kyoto home of Tokugawa Ieyasu, 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. After the tea ceremony, we will return to the ryokan. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 12 Kyoto – Fushimi Inari Shrine, Higashiyama District, Yasaka Shrine, Gion Geisha District, Meet a Maiko Session, Sayonara Dinner

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.We will follow the visit to the Gion with a Meet a Maiko session. Here, the Maiko (Geisha in training(will perform a couple dances, will answer your questions, and will allow a photo with her. We will then enjoy our "Sayonara" dinner at a nearby restaurant. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch and dinner at local restaurants are included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 13 Return Home

It's time to say "sayonara" (Goodbye). The group will depart at 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). Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: 1 to 4 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 25, 2027 - Apr 6, 2027 Late Cherry Blossom	$5,245.79/ $783.83	Available
May 6, 2027 - May 18, 2027	$5,013.01/ $783.83	Available
Jun 10, 2027 - Jun 22, 2027	$4,720.49/ $783.83	Available
Jul 8, 2027 - Jul 20, 2027	$4,720.49/ $783.83	Available
Sep 2, 2027 - Sep 14, 2027	$4,720.49/ $783.83	Available
Oct 7, 2027 - Oct 19, 2027	$5,013.01/ $783.83	Filling Fast! Only 2 seats left
Oct 28, 2027 - Nov 9, 2027	$5,245.79/ $783.83	Filling Fast! Only 2 seats left

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 – $175**
    - **80-84 – $300**
    - **85+ – $500**
  - **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 6am 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 12 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.)**
  - **Five lunches**
  - **Three 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.)**
- **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 the hotel in Tokyo to the hotel in Matsumoto (one bag only)**
- **Baggage transfer from the hotel in Matsumoto to the hotel in Kanazawa (one bag only)**
- **Baggage transfer from the hotel in Kanazawa to the hotel in 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**

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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