SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Central Japan Onsen



15 Days / 14 Nights

Central Japan Onsen

Tour Overview

Enjoy the good life - Japanese style. Our Onsen tours only stay at Onsens. On the Central Japan Onsen tour, you will enjoy the best local food specialties and the famous Japanese hospitality while relaxing in some of the best onsens in Japan and visiting out-of-the-way destinations.

Destinations

Tokyo, Shirahama Onsen, Kawayu Onsen, Hongu Taisha, Hayatama Taisha, Kii-Katsuura Onsen, Daimonzaka, Nachi Taisha, Nachi Taisha Waterfall, Gero Onsen, Takayama, Hirayu Onsen, Kamikochi, , Kusatsu Onsen

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

★★★★★

Pace

★★★☆☆

Physical Activity

★★☆☆☆

Tour Details

Visiting an onsen is the Japanese version of the good life. At Japanese onsens, you will enjoy excellent food and experience the famous Japanese hospitality. And don’t forget the Japanese baths. The Japanese have raised bathing to a whole new level, and they are an important experience that should be included in every visit to Japan. And in between all of this, we will be visiting some of Japan’s most remote sightseeing destinations. If you like Japanese food and enjoy the Japanese baths, this tour should not be missed.

Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims from the Kyoto Imperial Court 1,000 years ago as you visit the Kumano Sanzan, the ultimate destinations of the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage. Soak in the waters of Kii-Katsuura Onsen with its sea-side cave bath.

Visit the city of Takayama in the middle of the Japan Alps. With its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, Takayama has managed to retain its traditional charm. Stroll through Takayama’s farmer’s market, sampling the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs.

Relax and enjoy the natural beauty of Kamikochi, with its numerous gentle trails.

And last, but not least, enjoy the waters of Kusatsu Onsen, one of Japan’s most famous onsen. It is blessed with large volumes of high-quality hot spring water said to cure every illness but lovesickness. Kusatsu has the largest natural flow of hot spring water in all of Japan, much of which surface at the Yubatake in the town center. The sulfurous, highly acidic waters have been considered among Japan’s best for centuries, and the resort town has constantly occupied a top spot in onsen rankings. It is difficult to beat Kusatsu in terms of the quality and quantity of its waters.

PLEASE NOTE: Tattoos in Japan are stigmatized, and therefore tattoos are not widely accepted at onsen baths in Japan. If you have tattoos, you may not be allowed to use the baths.

Map



Destinations



Shirahama Onsen

Shirahama Onsen



Gero Onsen

Gero Onsen



Kawayu Onsen

Kawayu Onsen



Takayama

Takayama Morning Markets, Takayama Jinya, Sanmachisuji District



Hongu Taisha

Hosshinmonoji, Walk to Hongu Taisha, Hongu Taisha, Oyunohara, Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Center



Hirayu Onsen

Hirayu Onsen



Shingu

Hayatama Taisha, Kamikura Shrine



Kii-Katsuura Onsen

Diamonzaka, Nachi Taisha, Nachi Waterfall



Nachi Taisha and Waterfall

Nachi Taisha, Nachi Waterfall



Kamikochi

Free Day



Kusatsu Onsen

Kusatsu Onsen

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo, Travel by limousine bus to the hotel

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

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

Day 2 Travel to Shirahama Onsen

After breakfast, we will begin with a welcome/orientation meeting. We will then travel Shirahama Onsen, a well-developed onsen resort 100 kilometers south of Osaka. Its popularity as an entertainment destination and its proximity to Osaka caused Shirahama to become one of Japan's three biggest onsen resorts, along with Beppu on Kyushu and Atami on the Izu Peninsula. The main attraction is the 500-meter long white sand beach. Before leaving Tokyo, you will need to send your main luggage to Kawayu Onsen. You will need to take whatever you will need for two days/one night with you. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations are included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Shirahama Onsen - Sandanbeki, Senjojiki, Shirahama Beach

After breakfast, we will visit the Sandanbeki. The Sandanbeki consists of three steep cliffs with a large network of caves at water level. An elevator is taken down to the caves, which has a shrine inside and a network of tunnels. Next, we will visit Senjojiki is Japanese for "One Thousand Tatami Mats", which describes the appearance of these flat, sheet-like rocks. The Senjojiki are located along the coast, and visitors can walk out onto them.We will finish the day at Shirahama beach. The name Shirahama is Japanese for "white beach", and refers to the resort's other major attraction, a 500 meter long sand beach. Breakfast and Dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: Heavy

Day 4 Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage - Takijiri-oji, Chikatsuyu-oji, Tsugizakura-oji; Travel to Kawayu Onsen

After checking out of our accommodation, we will begin our adventure along the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Route, a 1,000-year-old pilgrimage route frequented by Kyoto Imperial Court members during the Heian Period. We will stop at Takijiri-oji, Chikatsuyu-oji, and Tsugizakura-oji, three main stops along the pilgrimage. After checking in, you will receive your luggage. And then you are free to enjoy the baths next to the river. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 5 Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage - Walk from Hosshinmon-oji to Hongu Taisha, Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Center, Oyunohara

After breakfast we will travel to Hosshinmon-oji. The Hosshinmon-oji was one of the five most important Oji along the Kumano Kodo because it was considered the entry into the sacred area around the Hongu Shrine (Oji were important places of worship along the Kumano Kodo). We will

walk the relatively easy 7 km (5 miles) to the Hongu Taisha Shrine. The first half of the walk is through small villages, but the second half of the walk is through a secluded, forested area. At the Hongu Taisha, our first shrine of the Kumano Sanzan, we will tour the shrine and pay our respects to the Kumano deities. Before continuing, we will stop at the Kumano Hongu Heritage Center where we can rest and learn more about the fascinating history of the Kumano Kodo. Later, we will continue our pilgrimage at the nearby Oyunohara. This was the original location of Hongu Taisha until 1889 when the shrine was destroyed by a flood and moved to its present location on higher ground. All of the pilgrimage trails of the Kumano Kodo lead to the Oyunohara. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 6 Travel to Shingu; Shingu - Hayatama Taisha and Kamikura Shrine; Travel to Kii-Katsuura Onsen

We will travel by bus to the Shingu station. From the station in Shingu, we will another bus to the Hayatama Shrine. While the shrine's current buildings are relatively new, the shrine has been located at its current location since at least the 12th century. Excavations in the area have unearthed religious artifacts from the 3rd century, indicating the area has been a site of worship even longer. The 800-year old tree located on the grounds highlights the area's tradition of nature worship. We will also visit the nearby Gotobiki-iwa, a gigantic rock located halfway up the slope of Gongen Mountain. Kamikura Jinja, a small shrine located at the base of this monolith is a truly unique experience. It is said that the gods descended to earth by stepping on this large stone. From there we will travel to the city of Kii-Katsuura where we will be staying overnight with unique baths in seaside caves. Before leaving Kawayu Onsen, you will need to send your main luggage to Gero Onsen. You will need to take whatever you will need for three days/two nights with you. Breakfast and dinner buffets at the accommodations are included.

Travel: 2 Hours Walking: Medium

Day 7 Walk along the Daimonzaka to Nachi Taisha; Tour Nachi Taisha and Waterfall

Today we will visit Nachi Taisha, the third of the Kumano Sanzan. We will take a bus to the base of the Diamonzaka, a 2 km (1 mile) cobblestoned staircase. The Daimonzaka winds its way through huge cedar trees that are as old as 800 years from the valley bottom to the Nachi Taisha Shrine. The Nachi Taisha Shrine is perhaps the most dramatic shrine in Japan. It is located high on a hillside with impressive views of the 133 meter (about 435 feet) tall Nachi-no-Otaki waterfall, Japan's tallest waterfall. This waterfall was the original religious focus of the area and was venerated by the earliest Japanese people. Even today it is hard not to be impressed by the power and the beauty of the falls. We will return to our ryokan at the Kii-Katsuura Onsen where you can once again rest in the seaside baths. Breakfast and dinner buffets at the accommodation are included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 8 Travel to Gero Onsen

After breakfast we will travel to Gero Onsen. In the Edo period, Gero Onsen was referred to as one of Japan's three best onsen. Today, the waters have retained that special quality which has made them so famous. After arriving at Gero Onsen, you will receive your luggage. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations included.

Travel: 6 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 9 Free Day at Gero Onsen

You are free to explore Gero Onsen on your own. Breakfast and Dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: TBD

Day 10 Travel to Takayama; Takayama - Morning Markets, Takayama Jinya, Free Time; Travel to Hirayu Onsen

Before leaving Gero Onsen, you will need to send your main luggage to Yudanaka Onsen. You will need to take whatever you will need for three days/two nights with you. After breakfast, we will travel to the city of Takayama in the middle of the Japan Alps. With its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, Takayama has managed to retain its traditional charm. We stroll through the farmer's market, sampling the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. After that, we tour the Takayama-jinya, 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. 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. Later in the afternoon, we will travel to Hirayu Onsen. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations are included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking:Medium

Day 11 Kamikochi - Free Day in Kamikochi

In the morning we will take the short bus ride to the nearby Kamikochi. 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. The day is free to relax and enjoy the natural 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 accommodation are included.

Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: TBD

Day 12 Travel to Kusatsu Onsen

After breakfast, we will travel 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. Later in the afternoon we will travel to Yudanaka Onsen. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations are included.

Travel: 4 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 13 Kusatsu Onsen - Free Day

Today is a free day to enjoy the many public baths of Kusatsu Onsen. Or, just relax at one of the many cafes and shops. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodation are included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: TBD

Day 14 Travel to Tokyo

Today is a travel day to Tokyo. You will have some free time in Tokyo in the afternoon. We will enjoy the Sayonara dinner in the evening. Breakfast at the accommodation and dinner at a local restaurant.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 15 Return Home

It’s time to say “sayonara” (Goodbye). Breakfast at the accommodation is included.

Travel: 1 to 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
May 23, 2027 - Jun 6, 2027	$7,570.50/ $1,189.65	Available
Oct 10, 2027 - Oct 24, 2027	$7,570.50/ $1,189.65	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. CO, FL, IN, 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 – $175
    - 75-79 – $375
    - 80-84 – $700
    - 85+ – $1,175
  - **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 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 hotel on your own.

- Sending service to the Kyoto train station.
  - 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.
- Reserved seat tickets on the train to Osaka's Kansai Airport (If you will be returning home from one of the Tokyo airports, please contact us for details about returning to Tokyo.)

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 hotels or ryokans and western style hotels

- Meals
  - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
  - Japanese-style, Western-style, or buffet-style dinner every night except for Day 1 (13 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 (Itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Kawayu Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Kawayu Onsen to Gero Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Gero Onsen to Hirayu Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Hirayu Onsen to Tokyo (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

- International 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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