



SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Winter Wonderland



15 Days / 14 Nights

Winter Wonderland

Tour Overview

The weather outside may be frightful, but touring Japan in winter is delightful. After you see how beautiful Japan is blanketed in snow, you'll be saying "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow."

Destinations

Tokyo, Lake Akan, Akan Crane Center, Kushiro, Abashiri, Sapporo, Nagano, Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park, Takayama, Shirakawgo, Kanazawa, Kyoto

Tour Factors



Cultural Immersion



Pace



Physical Activity



Tour Details

When you add the unique opportunities that only Japan winters offer with the small crowds, the result is an unforgettable travel experience. In the best that Japanese winters have to offer, you'll wander through the ice sculptures at the world-famous Sapporo Snow Festival, feast on all-you-can-eat grilled lamb and beer at the Sapporo Beer Garden, slash through the ice flows in an ice-breaker boat in the infamous prison town of Abashiri, contemplate the nearly-extinct, Japanese Red-Crested cranes, revered in Japanese culture, visit with the "snow monkeys" while they rest in thermally-heated mineral water to stay warm, explore quaint Takayama, visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go with its many snow-covered, thatched-roof gassho-zukuri (praying hand) homes, stroll one of the best gardens in Japan made even better covered with snow, enjoy a private "Maiko" dinner party, enjoy four gourmet Kaiseki-style dinners and grilled lamb dinner, and much, much more.

Tour Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Sapporo Snow Festival✓ Akan Crane Center✓ Jigokui-dani Snow Monkey Park✓ "Meet a Maiko" Session (a Maiko is a Geisha-in-training)✓ Abashiri Ice Flow Cruise✓ Grilled Lamb Dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden✓ Three "Kaiseki" style dinners including Crab Kaiseki Dinner in Abashiri✓ Two separate rides on a Shinkansen (bullet train)
Tour Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only)✓ Domestic airfare from Tokyo to Kushiro and from Sapporo to Tokyo✓ Reserved seat tickets on 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ International airfare is NOT included.✗ A printed itinerary is not included✗ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map



Tour Destinations

- 📍 Tokyo
- 📍 Lake Akan
- 📍 Akan Crane Center
- 📍 Abashiri
- 📍 Sapporo
- 📍 Nagano
- 📍 Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park
- 📍 Takayama
- 📍 Shirakawago
- 📍 Kanazawa
- 📍 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 guide. The guide will then help you board the bus to the hotel. After checking in, the evening is free. No meals included.

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

Day 2 Fly to Kushiro; Travel to Lake Akan

Before leaving in the morning, you will need to prepare your luggage to be transferred to Abashiri. You will be traveling to Hokkaido with your overnight bag only. Prepare your overnight bag for 3 days and 2 nights. After breakfast, you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. We will then be taking a bus to Haneda Airport, and then fly to Kushiro Airport, located in southeastern Hokkaido. We will then travel to nearby Lake Akan where we will be staying that evening. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Travel to Crane Center; Tour Crane Center; Travel to Kushiro

After breakfast, we will travel to the Akan Crane Center. It was once thought the cranes were extinct. However, about 50 years ago, a few cranes were found, and extensive efforts were made to bring them back from the brink of extinction. While much work remains to be done, the crane population has stabilized and is even growing. In the afternoon, we will continue on to Kushiro. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the hotel or local restaurant included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 4 Travel to Abashiri; Abashiri Ice Flow Cruise

We travel by train with overnight bags only to the city of Abashiri on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido. We will board an ice-breaker boat, where you can get a close-up view of the ice flow that clogs the Abashiri harbor every winter as the boat breaks its way through the ice flow. We will then travel to the ryokan where you will retrieve your luggage before dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant or at the ryokan included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 5 Travel to Sapporo; Grilled Lamb Dinner at Sapporo Beer Garden, Sapporo Snow Festival

Before leaving this morning you will prepare your luggage for transfer to Nagano. You will need to prepare an overnight bag for 3 days and 2 nights. Today we travel by bus to the city of Sapporo, the capital and largest city in Hokkaido. After checking in, we will have time to enjoy the Sapporo Snow Festival. This world-famous, annual event was first held in 1950, when six local high school students created snow statues. In 1955, the Japan Self-Defense Forces from a nearby base joined the fun by creating the first large snow sculpture for which the festival has now become famous. The festival gained its international fame when the city of Sapporo hosted the 1972 Winter

Olympics. In the evening, we will have dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden, located next to the original Sapporo Beer brewery, where you can try the local specialty of grilled lamb, cooked by yourself at the table. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 6 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 6 Free Day in Sapporo for the Sapporo Snow Festival

The day is free to explore the Snow Festival on your own. You can visit Odori Park or Susukino, the main sites of the festival. Here, you can enjoy the many, large snow and ice sculptures and the concerts using the sculptures as the stage. You can also enjoy the bird's-eye view of the festival from the Sapporo TV Tower, located at one end of the 1.5 kilometer long Odori park. Or visit the family-friendly Sato site, where you will find numerous ice slides as well as a puzzling snow and ice maze. In the evening, you can enjoy the sculptures which take on a totally different perspective when they are lit up. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: Medium

Day 7 Fly to Tokyo; Travel to Nagano

After breakfast, we will travel to Nagano. We will fly from Sapporo to Tokyo's Hanada Airport. take a bus to the Tokyo train station and a shinkansen to the city of Nagano. We will retrieve our luggage after checking into the hotel. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 8 Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park

After traveling by bus to the Jigoku-dani (Hell Valley), we will delight in the famous "snow monkeys" of Japan. The world famous Red-Faced "snow monkeys" are only found in Japan. During the winter, the monkeys enjoy using the baths to stay warm, just like people. We will return to Nagano after some free time at snow monkey park. Breakfast and the hotel and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 9 Travel to Takayama

Before leaving for the day you will prepare your luggage for transfer to Takayama. You will need to pack enough items for 2 days and 1 night. Today we travel to the city of Takayama by express trains. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. After checking in, you can stroll around the Sanmachisuji District, an area of merchant homes dating back to the late 16th century. A kaiseki style dinner will be served at the ryokan. Retrieve your luggage from the ryokan upon arrival. Breakfast at the ryokan and Kaiseki style dinner are included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 10 Takayama - Miyagawa Morning Market, Jinyamae Morning Market, Takayama Jinya, Sanmachisuji District, Free afternoon

This morning will be spent at the Farmer's Market strolling past the vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. We will be able to sample the numerous options as we go. After that we will tour the Takayama-jinya, which was the governing office of Takayama and the

surrounding area since the early 17th century. The afternoon is free to roam and explore Takayama. Visit the many temples and shrines, museums, rummage through antique shops, relax at one of sake breweries, or enjoy the San-machi-suji, an area of merchant homes dating back to the late 16th century. The evening is free to enjoy one of the many nearby Hida Beef restaurants. Hida Beef is the same thing as the more famous Kobe Beef. You will retrieve your luggage at the ryokan today. Breakfast is included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: Light

Day 11 Travel to Shirakawago; Shirakawago - Shirakawago Open Air Museum, Observation Deck, Free time; Travel to Kanazawa

Before leaving for Shirakawa-go, you will need to prepare your luggage for transfer to Kyoto, either to the airport OR the next destination. You will need to prepare for 3 days and 2 nights. We travel by bus to Shirakawa-go, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A number of "gassho-zukuri" style homes have been relocated to Shirakawa-go from surrounding locations. "Gassho-zukuri" literally translates to "praying hands home", and is a fitting description of these thatched-roof A-frame style homes which are well-suited for the large amounts of snow this area of Japan receives. We will visit the Shirakawa-go Open Air Museum, where you will get a glimpse into the hard lives of 18th century Japanese farmers. We will also visit the observation area where you will have a chance to view Shirakawa-go from above. Later in the afternoon, we will travel by public bus to the city of Kanazawa. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 12 Kanazawa - Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum, Nagamachi Samurai District, Nomura House

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 Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum to learn how the local Kanazawa handicrafts are made. 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 13 Travel to Kyoto; Kyoto - Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion)

After breakfast we will travel to the city of Kyoto. 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. Steeped in history and tradition, Kyoto has in many ways been the cradle of Japanese culture. A stroll through Kyoto today is a walk through 11 centuries of Japanese history. After lunch we will visit 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. Finally, 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. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 14 Kyoto - Fushimi Inari Shrine, Higashiyama District, Yasaka Shrine, Gion Geisha District, 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. Here, in a teahouse, we will attend a Meet a Maiko session. (A Maiko is a Geisha in training.) She will perform a short dance, answer any of your questions and pose for pictures with you. We will enjoy our "Sayonara" dinner at a local restaurant before returning to the hotel. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch and dinner at a local Japanese restaurant are included.

Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: Heavy

Day 15 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.)

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
Feb 2, 2020 - Feb 16, 2020	\$4,994.00/ \$600.00	Closed
Jan 31, 2021 - Feb 14, 2021	\$5,494.00/ \$600.00	Available

🎯 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.
- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the hotel near the airport
 - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the hotel near the airport
 - 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 hotel 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 and western-style hotels
- Meals
 - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
 - Four Japanese-style or Western-style lunches
 - Nine Japanese-style or Western-style dinners
- Domestic airfare from Tokyo to Hokkaido and from Hokkaido to Tokyo
- 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
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Abashiri
- Baggage transfer from Abashiri to Nagano
- Baggage transfer from Nagano to Takayama
- Baggage transfer from Takayama to Kanazawa
- Baggage transfer from Kanazawa to the airport OR next destination

Each tour member receives a 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 to and from Japan 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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