

Essence of South Korea & Japan

Classic Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 1

Seoul - Gyeongju - Busan - Fukuoka - Hiroshima - Miyajima - Kurashiki - Okayama - Osaka - Kyoto - Hakone - Tokyo

This two-week South Korea and Japan adventure gives a fascinating insight into two of Asia's most intriguing countries. Close in proximity yet culturally distinct, this tour offers the perfect way to experience the diversity of the Far East.

- Explore bustling Seoul
- Discover picturesque Busan
- Spend time in Gyeongju, 'the museum without walls'
- Reflect in Hiroshima
- Be charmed by Kyoto
- Feel the rush of Tokyo

TOUR MAP



ESSENCE OF SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (From dinner on day 1 to breakfast on the last day)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Japan on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis, so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

Our tours come with a physical rating to guide you in selecting a holiday that suits your comfort level. Joining any of our tours involves independent mobility and the ability to stay active throughout the day, which is essential for fully enjoying the unique charm of each destination.

'Essence of South Korea & Japan' falls under a Physical Level 1 category. This indicates a level of fitness that allows you to comfortably remain on your feet with occasional rest. Expect to effortlessly navigate boarding and disembarking from various modes of transport, including coaches, trains, and boats. You'll be walking around remarkable sites and taking ascending steps to capture those awe-inspiring views!

Please Consider:

- Sightseeing may often involve walking for a reasonable duration, sometimes over multiple steps, or uneven surfaces.
- Boarding and alighting from various boat sizes independently is part of the experience.

Our National Escorts are dedicated to providing a high level of service and support throughout your journey. However, their primary role is to manage the daily aspects of the tour. They are unable to offer extensive personal physical assistance. We kindly ask our travelers to be prepared for the physical aspects of the tour to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for everyone.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 17 days in duration including overnight international flights in both directions as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand. Please note, some flights may depart and arrive on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to info@wendywutours.co.nz so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Seoul and end the tour on Day 16 in Tokyo (depart either Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda airport). Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 2 of the itinerary. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2: Fly to Seoul **Meals: D**



Fly to Seoul, South Korea's dynamic capital. On arrival, meet your driver and transfer to your hotel with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time. This evening, you will meet your English-speaking guide for this evening's welcome dinner.

Please note your driver may not speak much English.

Please note: Early check in is not included. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your reservation's consultant.

Destination Information

Seoul – Capital of South Korea, Seoul is a dynamic metropolis where modern skyscrapers, shopping malls and pop culture meet Buddhist temples, palaces and street markets. Seoul was the capital of Korea from 1394 until the formal division of the country in 1948. However, its history stretches back over two thousand years. The name itself has come to mean "capital" in the Korean language.

Day 3: Explore Seoul **Meals: B, L, D**



Begin your Seoul adventure at Gyeongbok Palace, where you'll watch the 'Changing of the Guards' ceremony, and then visit the Palace itself and the surrounding grounds. '

Next, attend a Korean cooking class - make traditional bibimbap and enjoy your own creations for lunch!

This afternoon, head to the observation deck of the N Seoul Tower for panoramic views over the city.

Please note that due to a change in local traffic laws, you will need to leave the coach and travel by public bus to/from the tower.

You will spend a total of 4-5 hours on foot today, and please note that some areas may be busy.

Please note, if today's date falls on a Tuesday, your itinerary may differ due to the Gyeongbok Palace being closed on Tuesdays.

Destination Information

Gyeongbok Palace – Built in 1395, Gyeongbok Palace was located at the heart of newly appointed capital of Seoul (then known as Hanyang) and was the main royal palace of the Joseon Dynasty. The palace has been rebuilt after destruction several times, and today houses a couple of museums, ornamental gardens and some of Seoul's most outstanding architectural sights.

Insadong Antique Alley – Insadong Street, stretching over 700 meters, offers rich opportunities for visitors to experience Korean traditional culture and arts. Stores here specialize in a wide variety of Korean goods, including hanbok (traditional clothing), hanji (traditional paper), traditional teas, pottery, and folk crafts.

N Seoul Tower – The N Seoul Tower, built in 1969, is a communication and observation tower located on Namsan Mountain. At 236 metres, it marks the second highest point in Seoul.

Bibimbap - A popular Korean food, bibimbap is a rice bowl topped with vegetables. There is no one specific recipe: it is highly customisable, but egg and sliced beef are common additions.

Day 4: Visit the DMZ **Meals: B, L, D**

A 7.00 am start is required today as tickets to enter the DMZ are extremely limited and on a first come, first serve basis. (Start time may be earlier ifrequired and a breakfast box will be provided. This will be advised locally). Whilst every effort will be made to get the tickets, should this not be possible, then you will instead take a ride on the DMZ gondola and visit the Odusan Unification Observatory.



- The DMZ is a tightly controlled international border and can only be visited as part of a join-in tour led by DMZ staff. Therefore, your visit may be with clients who are not from Wendy Wu Tours.

You MUST bring your physical passport to join this excursion. Copies are not sufficient. Conservative clothing is required at the DMZ.

Should you not wish to visit the DMZ, then your day is at leisure in Seoul.

- The DMZ, along with other areas of South Korea, is under close observation by the South Korean Government. As such, changes may need to be made to your itinerary at short notice. Should this occur, your guide will advise locally of any touring changes.

Take an interesting morning tour to the DMZ, a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula that serves as a buffer zone between North and South Korea. Explore the DMZ Theatre & Exhibition Hall, walk along the 3rd Infiltration Tunnel, visit Dora Observatory & Station and see the Bridge of Freedom.

After returning to Seoul, stroll through Gwangjang Market.

Destination Information

DMZ – The Korean Demilitarized Zone is a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula, dividing the Korean Peninsula roughly in half. It was established by the provisions of the Korean Armistice Agreement to serve as a buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea. *Please note that while visiting the DMZ, photos can only be taken in the designated area and direction. The visit to the DMZ does not include a visit to the Joint Security Area and the blue hut on the border itself.*

The 3rd Infiltration Tunnel – The 'Third Tunnel of Aggression' is one of four known tunnels situated within the DMZ. The 265m long, steeply sloping tunnel was built by North Korea in the 1970s and is located more than 70m underground. North Korea initially denied its existence when South Korea discovered, then later claimed that it was a coal mine. It was eventually revealed that they had dug the tunnel to launch a surprise attack on Seoul. The South eventually took control of the tunnel, blocking off the demarcation line with the North via concrete barricades.

Dorasan Observatory – Located at the top of Mt Dora, the Dorasan observatory looks across the Demilitarized Zone. Visitors can catch a rare glimpse of the reclusive North Korean state through binoculars from the observatory and will be a
ble to see the North Korean propaganda village situated in the DMZ, a remnant of the old prosperity of the North.

Gwangjang Market – Gwangjang Market is one of the oldest and largest traditional markets in South Korea, with more than 5000 shops and 20,000 employees selling fabric, handmade crafts and hanbok (traditional costume).

Day 5: Explore Gyeongju **Meals: B, L, D**



Take a train from Seoul to Gyeongju - a journey of just over two hours. A city of cultural and historical relics, Gyeongju is called 'the museum without walls. Capital of the Silla Kingdom for over 1,000 years, the city is home to a staggering number of tombs, temples, statues and ruins, some of which you'll explore today.

Explore Gyeongju this afternoon, starting at the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple.

At both places, the terrain is uneven with steps, but there are handrails. Later, take a stroll along Anapji Pond.

You will spend a total of 4-5 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Gyeongju – Known as 'the museum without walls', Gyeongju was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Silla (57 BC – 935 AD) and was at one time the fourth largest city in the world. A vast number of archaeological sites remain in the city, including tombs, temples, rock carvings, pagodas and palace ruins.

Seokguram Grotto – Seokguram Grotto is part of the Bulguksa temple complex, lying four kilometres east. It is made of granite and was completed in 774. Seokguram Grotto contains a statue of Buddha looking at the sea, as well as other portrayals of gods, Bodhisattvas and disciples.

Bulguksa Temple – Bulguksa Temple was built in 528 during the Silla Kingdom but has undergone numerous renovations and reconstructions throughout history. It was designated as a World Cultural Asset by UNESCO in 1995 and it is home to many important cultural relics.

Anapji Pond – Anapji, or Wolji, is an artificial pond in Gyeongju National Park. It was part of the palace complex of ancient Silla, where the Silla royal family relaxed and enjoyed themselves. After the fall of Silla, the site was abandoned and forgotten.

Day 6: Explore Busan **Meals: B, L, D**

Begin the day at Gyeongju National Museum, where much of the Silla heritage is preserved. Tumuli Park, filled with the burial mounds of Sillan royals and nobility, and can enter an excavated tomb. Continue by road to Busan.



Enjoy a tour of Busan, starting with a stroll through the famous Jagalchi Fish Market, one of the largest seafood markets in Asia and browse the wares of Gukje market.

Next head to Dongbaekseom Island and soak up the peaceful nature before strolling along the esplanade of Haeundae Beach, enjoying the ocean views.

You will spend a total of 4-5 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Gyeongju National Museum – Gyeongju National Museum – Preserving much of the Silla heritage, the Gyeongju National Museum's collections include magnificent gold crowns, pottery, Buddhist artifacts, stone sculptures and the legendary Emille Bell, one of Asia's largest and most resonant bells made up of 25 tons of bronze and standing 11 feet high.

Tumuli Park – In the centre of town, the walled-off Tumuli Park contains over two dozen large and small tombs from the Silla period. Until quite recently this was a functioning, though quiet, part of town, but in the 1970s the buildings were removed, and the area beautified.

Busan – With over 3.6m people, Busan is South Korea's second largest city and the largest seaport. However, the city it is full of character and is known for its beaches, mountains and temples. As Busan was not captured during the Korean War, it gives a glimpse of Korea before the 1950s.

Jagalchi Fish Market – Jagalchi is the largest fish market in Korea, offering a huge variety of live seafood and restaurants. The name is said to originate from jagal, gravel in Korean, as it used to be surrounded by gravel.

Kukje Market – Steeped in decades of history, Gukje Market was established during the Korean War in 1950, intended to be a place for refugees to set up shop to make a living. It soon grew into a thriving, popular market.

Dongbaekseom Island – Dongbaekseom, meaning island of camellias, is an island located off one end of Busan's famous Haeundae Beach. Although years of sedimentation have connected the island to the mainland, Dongbaekseom is still referred to as an island.

Haeundae Beach – Haeundae Beach is considered one of Korea's most famous and beautiful beaches. The white sandy beach stretches 1.5km, creating a beautiful coastline.

Day 7: Goodbye South Korea, Hello Japan! Meals: B, L, D



It's time to say goodbye to South Korea and hello to Japan! Fly 1 hour to Fukuoka on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Your flight tickets will be provided locally.

After you clear immigration, your Japanese guide will meet you at Fukuoka Airport and welcome you to Japan. Immigration may take up to one hour. Your guide is aware and will be waiting for you.

Please note that this route was previously advertised as a 3 hour 40-minute ferry. Due to the recent suspension of the only suitable ferry, the ferry has been replaced by a flight.

Destination Information

Fukuoka - Fukuoka (Hakata) – Fukuoka sits on the northern shore of Japan's Kyushu Island. It is Kyushu's largest city, and the sixth-largest city in all of Japan. As the closest major city to the Asian mainland, it has a long history as a prominent merchant harbour and centre of trade. One of the main districts here, Hakata, was previously a separate city on the east bank of the river. The two cities were combined in the late 19th century. Although Hakata now technically refers to a specific district, you will find that some locals, signs and place names still refer to the whole city as Hakata.

Day 8: From Fukouka to Hiroshima **Meals: B, L, D**



Fukuoka is Kyushu's largest city, situated on its northern shore. Begin the day with a visit to the Dazaifu Tenmangu Shinto Shrine before exploring the National Museum to learn about the city's past.

Bid farewell to Kyushu and board the bullet train (shinkansen) for a speedy 1h 40-minute journey to Hiroshima, located on Japan's largest island, Honshu.

Please note that due to luggage restrictions on the bullet train, your luggage will be transferred directly to Osaka (max 1 case per person). You will need an overnight bag for your two nights in Hiroshima.

Destination Information

Dazaifu Tenmangu Shinto Shrine - holds a significant place in Japanese religious and cultural history. It continues to attract visitors from all walks of life, seeking blessings for academic success, tranquillity, and a deeper connection with Japan's spiritual heritage.

Hiroshima - At 8.15 a.m. on 6th August 1945, the US military dropped the world's first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. The destructive power obliterated nearly everything within a 2km radius, killing more than 70,000 people immediately; a further 20-70,000 subsequently died from injuries or radiation within the next year. Today, the city has risen phoenix-like from the ashes; it is now a powerful international symbol for peace.

Day 9: Hiroshima & Miyajima **Meals: B, L, D**



Spend the day in Hiroshima. Begin with a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum, where you will have the opportunity to pay homage to the victims of the 1945 atomic bomb.

Please be aware that the museum may be confronting and upsetting for some group members, and it is at your discretion if you wish to visit or enjoy time at leisure exploring the Peace Memorial Park.

Later, visit an oyster farm by boat before a short ride over the Seto Inland Sea to the holy island of Miyajima. Here, visit the Itsukushima Shrine and admire its giant torii gate, which appears to float on the water when the tide is in. Return to Hiroshima for dinner.

Destination Information

Miyajima – Miyajima is a small island less than 1 hour outside Hiroshima. While officially named Itsukushima, the island is more commonly referred to as Miyajima, Japanese for 'Shrine Island', because of its well-known main attraction, Itsukushima Shrine, a giant torii gate, which at high tide seems to float on the water.

Peace Memorial Park and Museum – The Peace Memorial Park and Museum is one of the most prominent features of the city. The trees, lawns and walking paths are in stark contrast to the surrounding downtown area. Before the bomb, the area of what is now the Peace Memorial Park was the political and commercial heart of the city, and this is why it was chosen as the pilot's target. The museum focuses on the events of August 6 and the subsequent outcome for the residents.

Oyster Farm – Oyster farming, also known as oyster aquaculture, involves the controlled cultivation of oysters for commercial purposes. Japan has a long history of oyster farming, and it is an essential part of the country's seafood industry.

Day 10: Discover Ancient Kurashiki & Okayama — Meals: B, L, D



Take a 75-minute bullet train to the town of Kurashiki. Explore its beautifully preserved Bikan Historical Quarter, where the streets along the banks of the Kurashiki River are lined with white walled kominka (traditional houses).

Next, drive 90 minutes to Okayama and visit Korakuen Garden, one of the 'Three Great Gardens of Japan'.

Later, board the bullet train for a 90-minute journey to the vibrant city of Osaka.

You will spend a total of 2-3 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Okayama – Okayama, an old castle town of the Ikeda daimyo family, is the capital city of its namesake prefecture. The prefecture is known for its delicious fruit and is often called the land of sunshine.

Korakuen Garden – Along with Kanazawa's Kenrokuen and Mito's Kairakuen, Korakuen is one of the 'Three Great Gardens of Japan'. Korakuen was built in 1687 and opened to the public in 1884. It is a spacious garden with typical Japanese landscape garden features, including a large pond, streams and walking paths. Quite unique for a Japanese garden, however, are Korakuen's spacious lawns.

Bikan Historical Quarter – During the Edo Period (1603-1867), Kurashiki was an important point along the distribution route of Japan's most important commodity, rice. A central section of the city's former canal system has been preserved in the Bikan Historical Quarter.
Along the canal, there are many of the original storehouses, which have been converted into cafes, boutiques, souvenir shops and museums.

Day 11: Explore Nara & Osaka **Meals: B, L, D**



Drive approximately one hour to Nara, Japan's former imperial capital, which is home to 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Sightseeing here will be about 3 hours on foot and may include a walk of up to 15 minutes from the coach parking area.

Look out for the park's beautiful resident sika deer, who have learned to bow to visitors! Visit Todaiji Temple, the world's largest wooden structure. This temple is home to the Daibutsu, an eighth-century bronze Buddha standing almost 15 metres tall.

After lunch, return to Osaka and enjoy a stroll in Dotonbori or the surrounding downtown area of Osaka, famous for its eye-catching signage and billboards.

Finally, visit the famous Osaka Castle, known for its views of the city. Please note since the castle is a defensive structure, there are several slopes on the way to the keep.

You will need to walk approximately 15 minutes from the drop-off point to the castle entrance.
Destination Information

Nara – Nara was Japan's first permanent capital, from 710 until 794, when it was moved to Kyoto. It remains full of historic treasures, including 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Todaiji Temple – The UNESCO-listed Todaiji is one of the Seven Great Temples of Japan and is home to the Daibutsu, one of the largest bronze Buddha statues in the world.

Dotonbori District – Historically a theatre district and still a popular entertainment area today, the Dotonbori district offer an eccentric and electric atmosphere.

Osaka – Osaka, formerly known as Naniwa, is Japan's third largest city and remains the economic powerhouse of the Kansai Region.

Osaka Castle – This beautiful castle is known for sweeping views of the city from its hilltop perch. Construction began in 1583 under Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who intended that the castle to become the centre of a new, unified Japan under his rule. He was a daimyo (feudal lord) who rose to power from a peasant background. In the early seventeenth century, the castle fell to Tokugawa, the first shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Day 12: Travel to Kyoto **Meals: B, L, D**



Drive approximately 90 minutes to Kyoto. This enchanting city was the capital of Japan for some thousand years and remains the epitome of traditional Japan.

Visit Ryoanji, the Zen 'temple of the peaceful dragon', and the famous Golden Pavilion of Kinkakuji before observing the age-old rituals of a tea ceremony.

Sightseeing on foot will be approximately 4 hours today.

Destination Information

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan from 794 until the late 1860s, when it was moved to Tokyo (then Edo) following the Meiji Restoration. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto and in nearby Nara, including old shrines and temples, screen paintings, beautiful gardens, and statues of Buddha.

Ryoanji Temple – Ryoanji Temple is a Zen temple renowned for its garden, which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles. The garden has fifteen stones, cleverly arranged so that one rock is always hidden from view at any angle. Fifteen is considered the number of perfections; just as no individual is perfect, viewers are unable to see all the stones. It is a reminder of one's imperfect and limited perspective.

Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – This Zen Buddhist temple sits over a 'mirror pond' in a classical garden of the 'go round' style. The top two floors are covered in pure gold leaf. The temple is an excellent example of the Japanese design principle of 'shakkei', meaning borrowed scenery, which connects the building with its wider setting.

Day 13: Explore Kyoto **Meals: B, L, D**



Start the day by visiting the Arashiyama bamboo forest, where you can admire the towering thickets. Later, try your hand at the Japanese art of fan painting before enjoying the rare opportunity to have lunch with a Maiko – an apprentice geisha. We ask you to be very respectful of the maiko and understand that she is in training.

This afternoon, visit the mesmerising Fushimi Inari Shrine, which covers the 233-metre-high Mount Inari. The mountain path is framed by thousands of vermillion torii gates; if time permits, you will walk up a short section of the route.

Due to the limited parking space at Fushimi Inari Shrine, you may need to walk for 15 minutes to reach the start point of the mountain path.

Destination Information

Arashiyama Bamboo Forest – This sprawling bamboo grove is one of Kyoto's most photographed spots. The trees here are moso bamboo, which can reach heights of up to 28 metres (92 feet).

Fushimi Inari Shrine (Taisha) – An important Shinto shrine in southern Kyoto, Fushimi Inari is most famous for its thousands of vermillion torii gates which form a network of tunnels around the main shrine buildings. The shrine itself is dedicated to Inari, the Shinto god of rice. There are many fox statues in the grounds of the shrine as foxes are thought to be Inari's messengers.

Day 14: Visit Hakone **Meals: B, L, D**



This morning, transfer to Kyoto station and take the super-fast bullet train to Odawara, a journey of 2 hours and 15 minutes.

In Hakone, board a coach to explore this beautiful area. Visit the Hakone shrine, situated on the shores of Lake Ashi and enjoy the breathtaking views of Mount Fuji in the background.

After lunch, take part in a Yosegi marquetry craft experience, before continuing by road to Tokyo – Japan's capital city.

This journey will take approximately 2 hours.

Please note that due to bullet train luggage limitations, your luggage will be transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo, arriving the following day. You will need to pack an overnight bag for your first night in Tokyo.

Destination Information

Hakone – Situated next to picturesque Lake Ashi, Hakone is a pleasant town, popular with weary Tokyoites looking for a break from the city and a great overnight stop after visiting Mount Fuji.

Lake Ashi – Formed after Mount Hakone's last eruption 3000 years ago, Lake Ashi is the symbol of Hakone.

Tokyo – One of the world's most cutting-edge capital cities, Tokyo is a city of contrasts, famous for its neon-lit streets, towering skyscrapers, peaceful shrines and lovely gardens. Tokyo became the official capital when the newly restored Emperor Meiji moved it there from Kyoto in the late 1860s.

Yosegi marquetry craft experience - the Japanese craft known as Yosegi Zaiku (marquetry) is a style of decorative wood craft combining timbers of different colors to create beautiful patterns and mosaics. The original technique of Yosegi Zaiku was developed during Japan's Edo period.

Day 15: Explore Tokyo Meals: B, L, D



Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its busy, high-tech façade and you will find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore. Begin your day at Meiji Jingu Shrine, then head to the 634-metre Tokyo Skytree and ascend to the observation deck for magnificent views.

Later, head to the vibrant Asakusa district and soak up the ambiance of Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple.

Due to the limited coach parking, you may need to walk around 15 minutes on flat road to reach Senso-ji.

After lunch, visit a bonsai museum and observe a demonstration before trying your hand at pruning your own. (Please note that you will not be able to take the bonsai home.)

Later, pass by the famous Shibuya Crossing en route back to the hotel.

End the day by taking a leisurely farewell dinner cruise on Tokyo Bay for some excellent city vistas.

Please note that you will be on your feet for most of the day, and the temples and Skytree can be busy. You will need to get on and off your boat this evening without assistance

Destination Information

Meiji Shrine – Meiji Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken. The shrine is in an evergreen forest within the busy city. Meiji was the 122nd emperor of Japan, but the first in centuries to hold true power, hence the term "Meiji Restoration". Under Meiji's rule, Japan underwent a period of rapid modernisation and became involved in global politics after centuries of isolation.

Sensoji Temple – Sensoji Temple is an ancient Buddhist Temple and the oldest in Tokyo. The temple was originally founded in the 7th century. The temple adorns an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

Bonsai tree experience - Discover the art of bonsai, the Japanese art of growing miniature trees in an artistic shape. The origins of bonsai are Chinese and were introduced to Japan during the Heian period, which is also the period when Buddhism was introduced into Japan. Adopted by the aristocracy and quickly elevated to the rank of art, they symbolise eternity and harmony between humans and nature.

Day 16-17: Depart Tokyo **Meals: B**

This morning is free at leisure before you transfer to the airport for your return flight home arriving home today or the following day.



Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day, please contact our reservations department who can confirm the additional price and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Transfers: If your flight departs outside of the majority group departure time, you will be transferred to the airport by a shared coach (not with other Wendy Wu Tours passengers). If you are on a shared coach transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to the coach.

ESSENCE OF SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

New Zealand passport holders do not need a visa for Japan if they are travelling for less than 90 days for tourist purposes. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

South Korea Entry Requirements – A visa is not required for New Zealand passport holders visiting South Korea, however all guests travelling to South Korea are required to complete an entry declaration form before arrival. This can be completed online, up to 72 hours before arrival in South Korea. For more information on the e-Arrival card, please visit the following website: https://www.e-arrivalcard.go.kr/portal/main/index.do

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

If the flights that you are booked on are transiting via a different country, please ensure you check the entry requirements for that country, as they may differ to the requirements than your destination.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN:

Korean and Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals in South Korea are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of soup and consist generally of banchan (side dishes) including Kimchi (seasoned and fermented vegetable), fish and meat. In Japan, meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, most famous being Udon and Soba. Most food is eaten with chopsticks as cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Korean food is generally hot and spicy compared to Japanese cuisine. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure. Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Korea Breakfast will mostly be buffet style but may be a set-menu.

In Japan, breakfast will mostly be buffet style but may be a set-menu. Lunches are mostly preset options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually a pre-set option or buffet style, featuring a wide selection of high-quality Japanese and Western dishes, but may occasionally be a set-menu. We usually find this style of dining suits the wide and varied tastes of our customers on tour. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes. All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available.

On some days where lots of sights are covered, dinner times may be early, and your tour group may head directly to the restaurant after sightseeing without stopping at your hotel to freshen up.

In South Korea, the restaurants operate differently than other Asian countries. If you want a desert, you must go to a desert shop. If you want a coffee, you must go to a coffee shop etc.

Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts. Your National Escort will do their utmost to cater for any special requests such as gluten free or vegetarian meals, however, people on restricted diets should expect complications.

Although most Asian countries are now quite developed, only quite recently have they started to widely accept Western guests. Western food requirements are quite far removed from Asian food requirements, and even medical reasons can be quite difficult to explain. While our ground partners will do everything they can to cater for a wide range of dietary requirements on tour, we ask kindly for your patience and understanding that they cannot always be delivered to the standard you will be used to at home.

It is recommended that passengers with food intolerances bring snacks or additional food items with them, especially when travelling further from major cities as not all dietary requests will be met due to the limited foods available.

Please read your travel guide which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in South Korea and Japan. We recommend that when it comes to Korean and Japanese food, you stay open minded, try to be adventurous and always have a go with the chopsticks!

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. In the Fuji area of Japan, hotels tend to be more traditional in style and culture. In this area, you may be asked to take your shoes off at the door and store them in a secure locker – this is very traditional Japanese culture. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the New Zealand and South Korea/Japan.

Please note that in Japan, hotel rooms and bathrooms are renowned for being small. Standard single rooms are usually smaller than a standard double or twin room, contain one small double bed (or one single bed), and are designed for one person to use. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air-conditioning, TV and telephone. Some hotels in South Korea have hot water restrictions, operating for a few hours at a time, usually in the morning and evenings.

Hotels in South Korea often do not have porters and you will be required to carry your own luggage. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/local guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in Japan. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

AIRPORT TRANSFERS:

As we offer our customers a variety of airlines to suit your needs, passengers will arrive/depart in Japan at various times during the day.

You will be met on arrival at the airport by an English-speaking assistant who will provide instructions for you to make your own way to your hotel using the direct airport bus. Please note the bus will be shared with other passengers and is not just for Wendy Wu Tours clients. If your hotel is more than a 5-minute walk from the drop-off bus stop, a taxi will be arranged for you prior to leaving the airport to meet you at the drop-off bus stop.

When you check-in to your hotel, a welcome letter will be provided with details of the group's welcome dinner or first meeting point. You will meet your national escort at dinner or, if arriving late, the following morning after breakfast at the welcome meeting. On your departure day, you will be provided with tickets for your return airport bus, to make your own way to the airport.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in South Korea and Japan are extremely well maintained and are comparatively smooth compared with the rest of Asia. Coaches and minibuses do not have onboard toilet facilities; however frequent bathroom stops are made for passenger's comfort.

High-speed/Bullet trains: Second class reserved seats are booked for our groups on high-speed/bullet trains; there will be toilet facilities on board. Due to the limited space on bullet trains, a separate luggage transfer service will be arranged for all suitcases (1 case per person). You will need to pack a separate overnight bag to carry on the train as your suitcase will not arrive until the following day after a bullet train journey. Your guide will indicate when you need to prepare for this throughout your tour.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Internal flights during your tour are arranged locally, so you will not be given a ticket until your guide helps you check in.

DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN:

South Korea and Japan are developed countries and as such matches the West in modernity and technological advances. South Korea and Japan are extremely safe country and takes great responsibility in maintaining high safety standards.

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and South Korea is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. To avoid any inconvenience, Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed throughout your tour.

The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the National Escort. If you are travelling in a smaller group, we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller, to be fair to the guide(s). We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour. Although tipping in Japan is not customary, if you feel you have received an excellent service, please feel free to tip your guide at your discretion.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE:

Korean and Japanese society and culture are built on intricate social etiquette and customs. As foreigners, we are not expected to be knowledgeable about all etiquette, but it will make your time in South Korea and Japan more enjoyable if you are respectful of local customs. Some examples of scenarios you may encounter include removing your shoes and hats when entering a temple or house (some restaurants as well).

You may be supplied with slippers at some places, but please come prepared with plenty of spare socks, and shoes that are easy to take off for the regular occasions when they must be removed. Your National Escort will advise you of some of these other customs at the beginning of your tour.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

If you are travelling within the below Public Holidays, please note that celebrations can last a several days and during these times some businesses will be closed. Coach, air and train travel may also be affected. Tourist attractions will be open; but may be crowded.

South Korea: Seollal (Lunar New Year) 28th -30th January 2025, Buddha's Birthday and Children's Day is 5th May 2025 and Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving) 5th to 7th October 2025.

Japan: Showa Day is on 29th April every year, 'Golden Week' public holidays fall annually at the end of April/beginning of May, Constitution Memorial Day is on 3rd May, and Emperor's Birthday is on 23rd February every year.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrate a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of NZD $300.00 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling to cities outside of Tokyo. US Dollars and New Zealand Dollars can be exchanged at Narita Airport and in some hotels, provided the New Zealand currency is new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be very limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a few steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: December 2025