Best of Japan

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 1

TOKYO – MOUNT FUJI - NAGANO - MATSUMOTO - TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA - KYOTO – HIROSHIMA – HIMEJI - NARA - OSAKA

Our most extensive tour of Japan includes all the classic sights and key cultural activities. Featuring modern cities, historical sights, and beautiful landscapes Best of Japan ensures you get the most out of your trip to this fascinating land.

- Discover delightful Kyoto & Nara
- Feel the rush of Tokyo & Osaka
- Reflect in Hiroshima & Miyajima
- Admire beautiful Mount Fuji
- Search for the Snow Monkeys
- Take time to reflect in Hiroshima & Miyajima
- Experience the speedy bullet train

TOUR MAP

BEST OF 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
- 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 will 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.

'Best of 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 ascending steps to capture those awe-inspiring views!

Sightseeing may often involve walking for a reasonable duration, sometimes over multiple steps, or uneven surfaces. You will also be required to get on and off the boat in Tokyo Bay without assistance.

Our National Escorts provide 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 travellers to be prepared for the physical aspects of the tour to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for everyone.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

For travellers that have booked a 'Land Only' tour with no international flights, please note the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if you are arriving on the start and departing on the conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre/post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo (arrive at either Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda airport) and end the tour on Day 17 in Osaka (departures from either Osaka Kansai or Osaka Itami 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's 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'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2 Tokyo Meals: D

Fly to Tokyo, the capital of Japan. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative, and transfer approximately 90 minutes to your hotel.

You will be transferred by shared coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour. If you are on a shared bus transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to your hotel.

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

Tokyo – Tokyo is a city of contrasts; neon-lit landscapes, towering skyscrapers, peaceful shrines and lovingly-tended gardens. Tokyo became the official capital when Emperor Meiji moved it from Kyoto to Tokyo (then Edo) in the late 1860s.

Day 3: Discover Tokyo Meals: B, L, D

Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its frantic, high-tech frontage and you'll find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore.

This morning, head to the Meiji Jingu Shrine, dedicated to one of the most influential emperors in Japanese history. Continue to the famous Shibuya Crossing, perhaps the most recognisable site in Japan.

According to the day of your visit, you will also visit either the East Gardens of the Imperial Palace or see the Imperial Plaza with Nijubashi Bridge. The gardens are closed on Mondays, Fridays, and occasionally Tuesdays. You will be on your feet for approximately 4-5 hours during your touring in Tokyo.

Return to your hotel for some time at leisure. This evening, transfer to the pier for your Tokyo Bay dinner cruise. *You will need to get on and off your boat this evening without assistance.*

Please note that the timings given above are approximate. During your time in Japan, there may be cases where your morning and afternoon activities are swapped around to match local availability.

In addition, throughout your time in Japan, some temples, restaurants and other venues, including the dinner cruise, may require you to remove your shoes before entering. Bare feet are not usually accepted. Therefore, it is recommended that you carry spare socks in your day bag throughout your trip.

Destination Information

Imperial Palace East Gardens – The Imperial Palace East Gardens are part of the Imperial Palace, the main residence of the Emperor of Japan and the former site of Edo Castle.

Meiji Shrine – Built in 1920, Meiji Jingu Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shōken. It was completed eight years after the emperor's passing. The Meiji period in Japan brought modernisation and westernisation, leading the country to join the world's major powers.

Shibuya Crossing – This is the world's busiest pedestrian crossing, inundated with so many advertisements that it is often compared to Times Square. An average of 3000 pedestrians crosses here every two minutes, yet long traffic jams are rare.

Day 4: Tokyo **Meals: B, L, D**

A dazzling, high-tech metropolis, Japan's capital has wonderfully traditional roots. Begin the day with a leisurely stroll through the old district of Asakusa for an opportunity to visit Sensoji Temple and pick up some souvenirs on nearby Nakamise Shopping Street.

Stop for lunch before heading to the 634-metre Tokyo Skytree, where you'll ascend to the First Observatory for panoramic views over the city.

You will be on your feet for approximately 3-4 hours during your touring in Tokyo.

Destination Information

Asakusa – Asakusa district was the entertainment and theatre hub of Tokyo during the Edo period. Its popularity grew as the many storehouse owners in the neighbouring Kuramae district grew in wealth, and pursued entertainment with their newfound disposable income. Now, it is lined with charming restaurants and souvenir stalls.

Sensoji Temple – Sensoji Temple is the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo. It dates to the 7th century and is adorned with an image of the Buddhist goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued from the nearby Sumida River by two fishermen. The temple is also famous for its giant red lantern, hanging dramatically in the Thunder Gate.

Tokyo Skytree – The tallest structure in Japan, the earthquake-resistant Tokyo Skytree is predominantly a television and radio broadcast tower.

Day 5: Tokyo – Hakone – Mt Fuji Meals: B, L, D

This morning, transfer to Hakone, a drive of around 2 hours.

Enjoy a short cruise across the peaceful waters of Lake Ashi, a lake formed by a eruption of Mount Hakone nearly three thousand years ago. These charming waters offer beautiful views of the enveloping mountains and even Mount Fuji on a clear day.

Afterwards, hop on the Hakone Ropeway cable car and soar over the hilltops to visit the volcanic Owakudani Valley. Later, check in at your hotel in Mishima or the wider Fuji area.

Please note, if Hakone Ropeway and Owakudani Valley is closed due to weather or volcanic smoke, you will visit Hakone Shrine and take the Komagatake Ropeway instead.

Destination Information

Mt Fuji – At 3,776m, Mount Fuji is the highest of Japan's mountains and remains an iconic symbol of the country. Mount Fuji is notoriously shy and is often enveloped by clouds.

Hakone Ropeway – The Hakone Ropeway allows visitors to take in spectacular views of the crystal-clear blue waters of Lake Ashi, the rising volcanic fumes of Owakudani and the grandeur of Mount Fuji on a fine, sunny day.

Owakudani Valley – Owakuduni translates to 'Great Boiling Valley', so named for its ongoing volcanic activity. Visitors flock to see the steam rising from the sulphur vents and watch as the thermal springs boil and bubble.

Day 6: Mt Fuji - Nagano Meals: B, L, D

This morning, see another side of Mount Fuji as you travel to the northeastern side of the mountain. On arrival, drive up to Fuji's 5th Station for mountain views.

The 5th Station is occasionally closed due to inclement weather. If the centre is closed, or if your guide feels that visibility is too poor to make this visit worthwhile, your guide will take you to Fuji San World Heritage Centre instead.

The afternoon visit will vary according to the date of your visit. Most groups will visit the Itchiku Kubota Art Museum, which displays some beautiful kimonos. Some groups will visit the charming village of Oshino Hakkai, famous for its eight beautiful ponds and lovely Fuji views. *Please note that the Itchiku Kubota Museum's opening days vary all year, and can change from week to week, sometimes at short notice. Your guide will update you locally*.

Continue by road to Nagano, a journey of approximately 3 hours (traffic depending). You will be on your feet for approximately 2-3 hours today.

Destination Information

Itchiku Kubota Art Museum – (Visit subject to local opening hours, which may change at short notice). Kubota Itchiku revived the lost art of Tsujigahana silk dyeing, used to decorate kimono during the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). The museum exhibits several of his creations, while the gardens, also designed by Kubota Itchiku, are also worth a stroll.

Nagano – Nagano is a gateway city at the edge of the Japanese Alps, and was one of the host cities of the 1998 Winter Olympics.

Day 7: Jigokudani Monkey Park Meals: B, L, D

Drive to Yudanaka in search of the snow monkeys (Japanese Macques) at Jigokudani Yaen-Koen Monkey Park. Take a short hike through the forested valley to reach the monkey pool, and watch them bathe and play in the warm waters.

Accustomed to humans, the monkeys can be observed up close, and they almost completely ignore their human guests.

Return to Nagano and visit the 7th-century Zenkoji Temple, one of Japan's most important Buddhist temples, before returning to the hotel.

Please note: From the parking area to the main snow monkey pool at Yudanaka, ***you will need to walk around 40 minutes each way through the sloping forested valley****.*

Good shoes are required, and the start and end points of the trail are steeper than the main walk; paths may be slippery after rain or snow. Please keep in mind that the snow monkeys are wild and sighting them is never guaranteed, particularly during the breeding season which runs from late September through to November.

If you do not wish to walk through the valley, you will be able to wait in the café area near to the coach park.

Destination Information

Jigokudani Yaen-Koen – Home to Japanese Macaques, also known as Snow Monkeys, Jigokudani literally means 'hell's valley'. It is named this because of the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the ground. It is in the baths of this hot water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak. Good shoes are required to reach the snow monkey pools.

Zenkoji Temple – Built in the 7th Century, the 'Virtuous Light Temple' houses a 'hibutsu', or 'secret Buddha'; believed to be the first Buddha statue ever brought to Japan, it has been a forbidden sight for more than a thousand years. The present structure is some 300 years old, and one of the largest wooden buildings in Japan. Though its Buddha is hidden, Zenkoji has welcomed travellers with open arms since its inception. In the 14th to 19th centuries, most Buddhist temples and sacred mountains were forbidden to women; there was no such rule at Zenko-ji.

Day 8: Nagano - Takayama **Meals: B, L, D**

Depart Nagano for Matsumoto. Spend some time in the Ishii Miso House to learn more about world-famous Japanese seasoning, a staple in all Japanese households.

After lunch, visit Matsumoto Castle, nicknamed Black Crow Castle for its unusual dark facade. It is one of only twelve original castles in Japan, and the wooden interior is one of the very few not reconstructed in ferro-concrete, making it one of the most authentic experiences of feudal Japan.

Later, drive west through the Japanese Alps to reach the lovely town of Takayama, nestled in the hills of Gifu Province.

Please note: You will need to remove your shoes to access the castle. There are some steep, polished wooden stairs to reach each floor. Please take your time and be mindful of those coming the other way. If you choose not to look inside the castle, you can enjoy the surrounding gardens, moat and architecture. You will need to walk for approximately 15 minutes from the coach parking area to the castle.

Destination Information

Takayama – Boasting one of Japan's most atmospheric townscapes, the layout of Takayama dates to the 17th century and is home to much Meiji architecture.

Matsumoto Castle – Nicknamed Crow Castle due to its dark black exterior, the Matsumoto Castle dates to the 16th century and is the oldest wooden castle in Japan. It is a 'hirajiro', meaning that the castle is built on plains rather than a hill or mountain.

Ishii Miso – Ishii Miso was founded in 1868 and is still producing miso, an essential ingredient in Japanese cuisine, by a unique traditional method.

Day 9: Explore Takayama **Meals: B, L, D**

Take a morning walking tour of Takayama. During the Edo period, this lovely mountain town was a hub for craftsmen, farmers and merchants from the surrounding mountains.

Head to the Miyagawa Morning Market, where you can sample some of the delicious local fruits and vegetables (at your own expense).

Later, take a leisurely stroll around the traditional houses of the area and visit Takayama Jinya.

If local opening hours permit, you will also visit the Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall and the Kusakabe Folk Museum.

Destination Information

Miyagawa Morning Market – Here, there are several stalls selling fresh vegetables, local craft works and local food products.

Kamisannomachi Street – This well-preserved part of the historic city features traditional houses, sake breweries, shops and cafes — some of which have been operating for centuries.

Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall – This hall exhibits some of the 'yatai' from Takayama's famous festival; a twice-yearly celebration when these huge parade festival floats are carried through the streets. Some date as far back as the 17th century.

Kusakabe Folk Museum – The Kusakabe were a family of prosperous merchants that worked for the shogunate in Takayama during the Edo period. This house is a wonderful example of an Edo period house and is now home to a folk arts museum.

Day 10: Takayama - Kanazawa **Meals: B, L, D**

Depart Takayama and drive north to Kanazawa. En route, stop to visit the charming, UNESCO-listed village of Shirakawa-go, famous for its beautiful old farmhouses in the 'gassho-zukuri' style, easily recognised by their steeply thatched roofs. Spend some time enjoying Shirakawa-go.

Continue driving to Gokayama, where you can try your hand at making washi paper - a famous local craft. Continue another 1.5 hours to Kanazawa, where you'll visit Nomura Samurai House before checking in at your hotel.

Destination Information

Kanazawa – Kanazawa is the capital of the Ishikawa Prefecture and is known for its beautiful samurai and geisha districts, as well as its stunning Kenroku-en Garden.

Washi paper – This Japanese paper is made from bark fibres and commonly used in the art of origami.

Shirakawago – This UNESCO-listed heritage village is famous for its unusual architectural style known as Gassho-Zukuri (lit. hands in prayer). The steeply thatched roofs of these houses are tilted at a steep angle for two reasons: first, to prevent heavy snow from accumulating in winter, and second, to create spacious attics for silkworm cultivation. The houses are usually built from local cypress wood.

Nomura Samurai Family House – Nomura Samurai Family House is a restored Samurai residence with a beautiful garden. Nomura was a high-ranked samurai of the Meiji Period.

Day 11: Kanazawa - Kyoto **Meals: B, L, D**

This morning, visit the beautiful Kenrokuen Garden. This is one of the finest gardens in Japan, home to beautiful waterfalls, ponds and charming tea houses.

After lunch, drive 4 hours to Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital.

Check in to your hotel and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

You will be on your feet for approximately 1-2 hours today

Destination Information

Kenroku-en Garden – One of Japan's 'Three Great Gardens', Kenrokuen dates to the early 17th century and is notable for its stunning beauty in all seasons. The spacious grounds were previously the outer garden of Kanazawa Castle, constructed by the Maeda family over a period of almost two centuries. The name Kenrokuen means 'having six features', these six being spaciousness, tranquillity, artifice, antiquity, water sources and magnificent panoramas.

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan from 794 until the 1860s, when it was moved to Tokyo following the Meiji Restoration.

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

Start the day by visiting the spectacular Kiyomizu Temple, where you will spend 1.5 hours on foot. Be sure to admire the impressive views of Kyoto from the balcony.

Later, return to the town to experience the age-old rituals of a traditional tea ceremony before lunch. Please note that you may be required to remove your shoes before entering the venue.

After lunch, visit Fushimi Inari Shrine, one of Kyoto's most famous sites. The shrine is renowned for its thousands of vermillion torii gates, which frame a scenic path up the mountain's forested slopes.

Due to limited parking space at Fushimi Inari Shrine, you may need to walk for 15 minutes from the coach to the beginning of the torii gates, from which point you can walk up a short section of the mountain.

Destination Information

Kiyomizu – Meaning 'Pure Water Temple', the 16th century Kiyomizu Temple is one of the most celebrated temples of Japan and houses the Jishu Shrine dedicated to the deity of love. A highlight is the Hondo's veranda which is perched over the hillside, offering spectacular woodland vistas.

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 13: Kyoto - Hiroshima **Meals: B, L, D**

Spend the morning further discovering Kyoto's temples. Start the day at the famous Kinkakuji, also known as the 'Golden Pavilion' thanks to its beautiful gold leaf exterior.

Later, visit Ryoanji, the 'temple of the peaceful dragon', which is home to Japan's most famous rock garden. *Sightseeing on foot will be approximately 3-4 hours on foot today.*

After lunch, transfer to Kyoto Station and take the bullet train to Hiroshima, a journey of 1 hour 40 minutes.

Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for tonight. Due to bullet train luggage limitations, your main luggage (max one case per person) will be transferred separately to your Hiroshima hotel, arriving the following day.

Destination Information

Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – Kinkakuji Temple is a Buddhist temple overlooking a large pond. It was once the retirement villa of the self-appointed shogun Ashikaga Takauji (ruled 1338-1358), whose line replaced the fallen Kamakura Shogunate. According to his will, it became a Zen temple after his death. Each level is built in a different style, and the top two levels are covered in beautiful gold leaf.

Ryoanji Temple – Ryoan-ji 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.

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 14: Explore Hiroshima **Meals: B, L, D**

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; it is at your discretion if you wish to visit or spend time at leisure exploring the Peace Memorial Park.

After lunch, take a short ferry to Miyajima Island (Itsukishima), where sightseeing will be at a leisurely pace on foot. Admire Itsukushima Shrine's 'floating' Torii gate and explore Omotesdano Street, the island's main thoroughfare. Return to Hiroshima by ferry ahead of this evening's dinner.

You will be on your feet for approximately 4-5 hours today.

Destination Information

Peace Memorial Park and Museum – The park 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 atomic bomb was dropped, this area was the political and commercial heart of the city and is why it was chosen as the target.

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

Day 15: Hiroshima - Osaka **Meals: B, L, D**

Drive east to Himeji to visit the magnificent Himeji Castle, one of Japan's most impressive feudal-era forts.

Afterwards, take a stroll through Koko-en, an Edo-style Garden just across the castle moat. Later, continue to Osaka and check in at your hotel.

Please note: The castle is largely in its original condition, so please be mindful of your step when strolling around. You will be required to remove your shoes before walking along some of the wooden floors, and there are some steep wooden steps to reach certain areas. You will be on your feet for approximately 3.5 hours during the visit.

After the reopening in March 2015, Himeji Castle has welcomed many visitors. As such, they now issue numbered tickets to visitors to limit the number of people who can enter the Main Keep, with the aim of reducing congestion and protecting the building. Please note that this means that there may be cases where some visitors are not allowed to enter the Main Keep.

Destination Information

Himeji Castle – Often considered Japan's most magnificent castle for its imposing size and beauty, the well-preserved Himeji castle is a World Heritage listed treasure. Himeji Castle has never been destroyed by war, earthquake or fire, and survives to this day as one of the country's twelve original castles.

Koko-en Garden – Koko-en opened in 1992, but its 9 beautiful gardens were built in the style of the Edo period of 1603-1807. Edo period gardens are characterised by their return to extravagance and recreation, in sharp contrast with the minimalism of the Zen-influenced Muromachi period which had come before. The gardens are built on the former site of the feudal lord's west residence.

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

Day 16: Explore Nara & Osaka Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately one hour to Japan's former imperial capital, Nara, 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. Continue to Isui-en Garden, known for its natural ponds.

Please note that if your visit falls on a Tuesday, you may instead visit the neighbouring Yoshiki-en Gardens or a similar site instead. Opening days can vary throughout the year. Return to Osaka and visit the famous Osaka Castle, one of Japan's most famous landmarks, before tonight's farewell dinner.

Destination Information

Nara – Due to Nara's past as the first permanent capital, it remains full of historic treasures, including 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Todaiji Temple – A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Todaiji Temple is one the Seven Great Temples of Japan and is home to the, Daibutsu one of the largest bronze Buddha statues in the world.

Isui-en Garden – Isui-en is an attractive Japanese garden divided into two parts, a front garden and a rear garden, with several tea houses scattered throughout. The front garden dates to the mid-17th century, while the rear garden, the larger of the two, was built in 1899 by a wealthy merchant.

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 Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Day 17 - 18: Depart Osaka **Meals: B**

Unless you have booked additional nights in Japan, today is at leisure until your airport transfer.

Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not included in our Best of Japan tour. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in Osaka, 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. In this case, your guide will distribute transfer tickets in advance.

JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Visas are not required for New Zealand passport holders for entry into Japan for stays of up to 90 days. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

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 JAPAN:

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. 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, the most famous being Udon and Soba. 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 different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Japan. Food is an important element of Japanese culture. It is a time for families and friends to come together and much of family life revolves around the dinner table. Most food is eaten with chopsticks – Western cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Breakfast will mostly be buffet-style but may be a set menu. Lunches are mostly pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually 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 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. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in New Zealand.

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.

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, 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. Please note, double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

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 your home country and 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. Hotels in Japan 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 our 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.

TRANSFERS:

As we offer our customers a variety of airlines to suit your needs, clients will arrive/depart in Japan at different times during the day. Depending on the number of customers arriving/departing on the same flight as yourself, the type of transfer to your hotel/airport will vary.

You will always be met on arrival by English-speaking staff and transferred all the way to your hotel either by:

- Direct shared bus (shared with other passengers, not just Wendy Wu Tours clients),
- Shared bus plus taxi from the nearest bus stop to the hotel (maximum 5 minutes' walk),
- Chartered coach (if there are more than 8 Wendy Wu Tours passengers arriving at the same time).

On the departure day, all passengers will be met by English-speaking staff at the hotel and transfer by one of the three ways as above. For those passengers using a shared bus or shared bus plus taxi to the airport, the guide services end when they drop you off at the bus stop, and you will need to check in at the airport on your own. If you have paid extra for a private transfer, the above does not apply.

You will meet your national escort at the welcome dinner or, if arriving late, the following morning after breakfast at the welcome meeting.

Please ensure your Wendy Wu Tours luggage tag is visible on your suitcase/hand luggage, as this may also assist your guide in identifying you. If at any stage you are unable to locate your representative, please contact our Japan ground operator on the number included in your final documents.

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 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.

Bullet trains: Second-class reserved seats are booked for our groups on 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.

DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN:

Japan is a developed country and as such matches the west in modernity and technological advances. Japan is an 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:

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:

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 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 Japan public holidays, please note that celebrations can last a couple of 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. Showa Day is on 29th April every year, which will start Golden Week which then runs from 29th April – 5th 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:

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling to cities outside of Tokyo. 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 Health centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safetravel 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.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

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.

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