

Christmas in Japan

2026

Classic Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 1

Tokyo – Mount Fuji – Matsumoto – Takayama – Kanazawa – Kyoto – Nara – Koyasan – Osaka

Join us this Christmas and discover Japan in one of its most charming seasons – early winter, when snow blankets the mountain villages, Tokyo twinkles with Christmas lights, and Mount Fuji enjoys some of its clearest skies. Embark on a two-week winter exploration of Japan's vast cities and mountain villages, including a wonderful three-night stay in Kyoto at Christmas.

- Enjoy a sweet-making class in Kyoto on Christmas Day
- Spend 2 nights in the beautiful Fuji region
- Admire the authentic castles of Matsumoto and Himeji
- See traditional village life in Shirakawa-go
- Get cosy in a Japanese onsen
- Glimpse Buddhist life in Koyasan

TOUR MAP



CHRISTMAS IN JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- 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 things you may have to pay for are personal expenditures 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 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.

'Christmas in Japan' falls under our Physical Level 1 category. A reasonable level of fitness is required. Expect to be on your feet for most of the day walking around sights, often including steps and getting on and off coaches, trains or boats. Longer walks may be included.

On this tour, please give extra consideration to the following.

- You will regularly be required to remove your shoes at indoor temples, castles, and sometimes even restaurants, in keeping with Japanese culture. Non-slip socks with grip are recommended for sites such as Matsumoto Castle, which has some steep wooden steps.
- Weather can impact the difficulty of your trip. When travelling at Christmas, we recommend wearing waterproof shoes with good grip in case of ice or snow on pathways.

Guides 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 travellers 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 international flights or 15 days in duration based on 'Land Only'.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo (arrive into either Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda airport) and end the tour on Day 16 in Osaka (departures from either Osaka Kansai or Osaka Itami airport). Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions. 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.

Day 1-2: 14-15 December – Welcome to Tokyo Meals: D



Fly overnight to Tokyo, Japan's incomparable capital. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transfer approximately 1 and a half hours to your hotel.

Please note: Early check in is not included. If you wish to arrange this at additional cost, please speak to your reservations consultant; please note that it may not be confirmed until close to departure. Otherwise, Japanese hotel rooms are usually available from 3.00 p.m. on the date of arrival.

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 the Meiji Emperor moved it from Kyoto to Tokyo (then Edo) in 1867.

Day 3: 16 December – Tokyo City Tour Meals: B, L, D



Tokyo is the ultimate metropolis, perfectly blending modern technology with beautifully serene backstreets and old temples.

Head to the observation deck at Tokyo Skytree for panoramic views over the city before wandering through the district of Asakusa for an opportunity to pick up some souvenirs at Nakamise Shopping Street.

Continue with a visit to Sensoji Temple, with its five-storey pagoda and the iconic large red Kaminarimon Thunder Gate lantern. After lunch, uncover centuries of Japanese history with a visit to the Tokyo National Museum, found in Ueno Park.

You will be on your feet for 4-5 hours during today's touring in Tokyo.

Destination Information

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

Sensoji Temple – Sensoji is the oldest Buddhist Temple in Tokyo, having originally been founded in the 7th century. It is adorned with an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo, and who is often worshipped as a goddess of compassion and mercy.

Tokyo National Museum – The TNM displays incredible collections from Asia, with a particular focus on ancient and medieval Japanese art.

Day 4: **17 December – Tokyo** Meals: B, L, D

Discover Tokyo's most famous highlights, from the lively Shibuya Scramble Crossing to famous neighbourhoods like Shinjuku. Head to the Shinto shrine of Meiji Jingu, surrounded by a small forest that feels a universe away from Shibuya just a few minutes' drive away. Here, learn about the Emperor Meiji, who presided over the Meiji Restoration: Japan's transition from feudal state to world power.



After lunch, the afternoon is at leisure to make the most of Tokyo independently. This evening, meet your group for dinner, and stop to enjoy the city's beautiful Christmas illuminations.

Destination Information

Meiji Jingu – This Shinto shrine in the Shibuya district is nestled in a peaceful, evergreen urban woodland; a small oasis of calm in a busy city. It was built to commemorate the role of Meiji Jingu

Shibuya Scramble 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 cross here every two minutes, yet long traffic jams are rare.

Independent Exploration in Tokyo – Your guide will be best placed to advise you about Japan's excellent public transport system. You may like to visit the Imperial Palace Gardens (closed Mondays and Fridays), do some shopping in fashionable Ginza, or visit an art gallery such as the Sumida Hokusai Museum (nearest station Ryogoku). This small but interesting gallery displays works by this famous woodblock artist.

Day 5: 18 December - Mount Fuji (Southern side) Meals: B, L, D



Head west out of Tokyo to Hakone. Winter is considered the best time of year for viewing Mount Fuji, when the skies are often cool and clear, and the mountain is usually wearing its famously beautiful snow cap.

Take a short cruise across Lake Ashi, then ride a cable car along the Hakone Ropeway to reach Owakudani, the 'boiling valley' known for its volcanic hot springs and steaming vents. The wider Fuji area is your home for the next two nights.

Due to your early start this morning, you may need to take a packed breakfast with you. Your breakfast will be provided.

Destination Information

Mount Fuji – The impressively symmetrical stratovolcano of Mount Fuji is Japan's highest mountain at 3,776m. It holds great spiritual meaning to the Japanese people, and its intermittent volcanic activity means it has become a symbol that links Shintoism and Buddhism, people and nature, and symbolic death and rebirth. Fuji is also globally recognised as the symbol of Japan.

Lake Ashi – Formed after Mount Hakone's last eruption 3000 years ago, Lake Ashi is the symbol of Hakone and on a clear day offers spectacular views of Mount Fuji in the distance.

Day 6: 19 December – Mount Fuji (Northern side) Meals: B, L, D



Continue your Fuji adventures with a visit to Oshino Hakkai, a charming village filled with mineral-rich ponds and slowly spinning water wheels. Continue to Kawaguchiko, a town famous for its Fuji views. Visit Fujisan World Heritage Centre, where you can learn about the mountain's spiritual and geological significance. If weather permits, enjoy a photo opportunity on the viewing deck.

If conditions allow, the group will visit Arakura Sengen Park and have the option to climb the 398 steps to the observation deck. On a clear day, the deck offers incredible views of the beautiful Chureito Pagoda. You are reminded to wear walking boots with good grip, especially if you intend to climb. Please take the steps at your own pace; they may be snowy or icy.

Return to your hotel in the Fuji region.

Destination Information

Oshino Hakkai – 'Hakkai', or 'Eight Seas' refers to the tranquil Fuji springs that bubble up from the ground in the village of Oshino, nestled in the foothills of Mount Fuji. Spinning water wheels, thatched buildings and pools teeming with koi evoke the feeling of a time gone by.

Fujikawaguchiko – Nestled in the foothills of Mount Fuji, the town of Fujikawaguchiko is home to three of the Fuji Five Lakes; Kawaguchi, Sai and Shoji, all formed by previous eruptions of Fuji.

Chureito Pagoda – This iconic red pagoda in Arakura Sengen Park sits at the top of a 398-step staircase; climbers are rewarded with incredible view. On a clear day in winter, the contrast of the iconic, snow-dusted red pagoda against the blue sky, with unobscured views of Fuji rising on the horizon, is one of the most sought-after views in Japan.

Day 7: 20 December - Matsumoto Castle Meals: B, L, D



Drive north into the foothills of the Japanese Alps. Stop in Matsumoto to explore the iconic 16th century Matsumoto Castle, also known as 'Crow Castle', due to its intense black exterior.

Next, drive 2.5 hours west through the Alps to Takayama, an atmospheric town nestled high in Gifu province's mountainous Hida region. Check in to your hotel in Takayama and enjoy the relaxing onsen facilities. Tonight's dinner will feature Hida beef – a local speciality.

From the coach parking to Matsumoto castle, it is around 15 minutes' walk on flat road. There are steep ladder-style steps in the Matsumoto Castle that you must climb up and back down again. Please note, 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. Socks with grip are recommended.

Destination Information

Matsumoto Castle – Known as the 'Crow Castle' due to its dark black exterior, Matsumoto Castle dates back to the 16th century and is the oldest wooden castle in Japan.

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

Hida beef – Hida beef is a protected name for beef from a Japanese black cattle that arrived in Japan in the 2nd century; the animal must have been raised in Hida's mountains for at least 14 months. It is known for its distinctive juiciness and ideal marbling.

Day 8: 21 December - Explore Takayama Meals: B, L, D

Wrap up warm and head out to explore this lovely mountain town. Stroll around the traditional houses of the Old Town and visit the museums, stopping at Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall, Kusakabe Folk Museum, and Sannomachi Street before lunch.



This afternoon, enjoy some free time to explore independently, or perhaps make use of the onsen facilities at your hotel.

Destination Information

Takayama Festival Floats Museum – 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.

Gifu Prefecture – The mountainous terrain here is not conducive to growing rice; buckwheat is the dominant crop. The region is known for its washi paper production and silkworm farming.

Day 9: 22 December - Shirakawago & Kanazawa Meals: B, L, D

Check out of your hotel and drive 90 minutes north to the UNESCO-listed village of Shirakawago, famous for its traditional wooden gassho farmhouses. With their steep thatched roofs, often laden in snow, these houses are one of the most iconic winter views in Japan. Visit the largest farmhouse – Wada House – and learn about life in this remote rural area.



Continue to Kanazawa, a serene city known for its samurai history, and check in at your hotel.

Please note: There are some stairs in Wada House if you want to explore the higher levels. Good shoes are needed today in case of snow.

Destination Information

Shirakawago – Shirakawago is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its unusual architectural style known as Gassho-zukuri. The roofs of these houses slope steeply, reminiscent of 'hands in prayer'. Gassho-style houses were developed in response to the need for large indoor space for farming silkworms. The design is incredibly strong, allowing the houses to withstand and shed heavy snowfall in winter; be careful not to stand directly under the eaves!

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

Day 10: 23 December - Kenroku-en – Samurai District – Train to Kyoto Meals: B, L, D

Visit beautiful Kenrokuen, one of Japan's Three Great Gardens. Here, admire the *yukitsuri*, a technique using ropes to support the pine tree branches and their heavy blankets of snow. Later, stroll through the Edo-period Nagamachi District and visit one of its old samurai houses.



This afternoon, board the Thunderbird limited express train for a 2hr15 minute journey to Kyoto, Japan's cultural heart. This wonderful, history-steeped city will be our home for three nights over Christmas.

Destination Information

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years until 1867 when it was moved to Tokyo. 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.

Day 11: Christmas Eve - Explore Kyoto Meals: B, L, D



Discover the highlights of Kyoto. Once the capital of Japan, this former seat of power wears its history proudly on its sleeve. Begin at Kiyomizu Temple, with its views over Kyoto. Later, admire the pathway of vermilion torii gates at Fushimi Inari Shrine, and stop for a photo at the gleaming Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku-ji.

You will need to remove your shoes at Kiyomizu. Please note, due to the limited space of Fushimi Inari Shrine coach parking, you may need to walk from the coach parking for 15 minutes. You will walk up part of the mountain and the incline allows a steady-paced walk around 15 minutes with flat road and steps to reach the torii gates.

Sightseeing will include approximately 2-3 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Ryoanji Temple – Ryoanji Temple is a Zen temple renowned for its garden, which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles.

Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – Kinkakuji Temple is a Buddhist temple and is an excellent example of Japanese garden design. The structure is famous for the beautiful gold leaf that adorns the façade.

Day 12: Christmas Day - Kyoto Meals: B, L, D



Wake to a Christmas day like no other. Spend the morning at a traditional tea house, where you'll have the option to don a kimono before enjoying a tea ceremony and wagashi sweet-making experience.

These beautiful *namagashi* treats are a traditional sweet made of fruit, azuki bean paste and rice flour. Traditionally served with tea, these treats are eaten at the turn of the year for good luck.

Afternoons, indulge in a special Christmas lunch. The afternoon is at leisure to explore Kyoto, call loved ones at home, or simply relax until dinner.

Day 13: Boxing Day – Nara & Osaka Meals: B, L, D



Bid farewell to Kyoto and drive 1 hour south to Nara, Japan's former imperial capital. Visit Todaiji Temple, the world's largest wooden structure, and meet Nara's sacred deer, who roam here at leisure and enjoy bowing to visitors. Visit the Edo-period Isui-en garden, where sasanqua camellias usually bloom in December.

Continue to Osaka and check in at your hotel before dinner.

Destination Information

Nara – Home to 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Nara is a rewarding destination and a great spot for Japanese culture.

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

Osaka – Osaka, formerly known as Naniwa, is Japan's third largest city and remains the economic powerhouse of the Kansai region. The city is famed for its delicious food and is often referred to as the culinary capital. The city also boasts vibrant colours that surround each street, rich history and culture.

Day 14: 27 December – Day trip to Koyasan Meals: B, L, D



This morning, drive 2 hours into the mountains to experience the tranquil winter beauty of Mt Koya, the heart of Shingon Buddhism. Visit the Kongobuji Temple and Garan temple complex.

As the year draws to a close, wander through the vast, otherworldly Okunoin cemetery. Here, frost glitters on the centuries-old gravestones, stone lanterns glow softly, and hundreds of ancient cedars tower over visitors.

The walk through Okunoin Cemetery to the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi is roughly 2km and may require walking over uneven surfaces on occasion. Good shoes are recommended.

Destination Information

Kongobuji Temple – Dating back to 16th century, the Kongobuji Temple is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. The interior of the building is adorned with paintings of cranes and there are sliding doors throughout.

Garan Temple – Garan Temple is a compound of seven halls, the ideal number of halls in Buddhism. The main site of worship is in front of the Cosmic Buddha.

Okunoin Cemetery – Home to Kobo Daishi's mausoleum (founder of Shingon Buddhism), Okunoin Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Japan, with over 200,000 tombstones. Many Shingon Buddhists choose to be buried near Kobo Daishi.

Day 15: 28 December - Himeji & Kobe Meals: B, L, D

Drive west from Osaka to Himeji, one of Japan's most magnificent castles. Explore the majestic 17th-century keep before lunch.



Drive to Kobe, where you'll visit a small sake brewery museum and a Christmas market before indulging in a farewell dinner. Try Kobe's famous Wagyu beef or an alternative vegetarian dish before returning to Osaka.

Destination Information

Himeji Castle – As Japan's largest castle, dating back to the 1300s, the UNESCO-listed Himeji complex is considered the finest surviving example of a Japanese castle.

Kobe – Formerly known as Hyogo Port, Kobe is a long, narrow coastal town. It was one of the first cities to open for trade with the West, and remains a major port today. It is famous for the local delicacy, Kobe beef; Wagyu beef from Japanese Black Cattle, which must be raised in this area.

Day 16-17: Depart Osaka Meals: B



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

Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not included. 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.

PLEASE INFORM OUR RESERVATIONS TEAM OF ANY ALLERGIES AND/OR SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS AT THE TIME OF BOOKING.

JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

A visa is not required for New Zealand passport holders for entry into Japan for stays 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.

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.

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, 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 so best get practicing as 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 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. 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 at home.

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 will 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 a 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 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, passengers will arrive/depart in Japan at various 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 be met on arrival/departure and transferred between the airport and the hotel either by:

- Private car from the nearest bus stop to the hotel (maximum 5 minutes' walk).
- Chartered coach or minibus (if there are multiple Wendy Wu Tours guests with similar flight times).

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 mini buses do not have onboard toilet facilities, however frequent bathroom stops are made for passengers 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 will 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 DIFFERENCES:

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 (and some restaurants). You may be supplied with slippers at some places, but please come prepared with plenty of spare socks, including some with grip for castles with wooden floors. We recommend shoes that are easy to take off for the fairly regular occasions when they must be removed. Bare feet are not accepted in Japan. Your National Escort will advise you of some of these other customs at the beginning of your tour.

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.

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.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of 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:

Wendy Wu does not give specific health advice, but we do recommend you see your doctor at least six weeks prior to travel for advice and to allow time for any necessary vaccinations. Please remember to take your itinerary with you. 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.

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 along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: November 2026