



Gardens of Japan

Classic Tour | 16 Days | Physical Level 1

TOKYO — MOUNT FUJI — MATSUMOTO — TAKAYAMA — KANAZAWA —
KYOTO — NARA — HIMEJI — OSAKA

A journey through Japan's exquisite gardens, traditional arts and most iconic sights. From the celebrated landscapes of Kenroku-en and Koko-en to Kyoto's Zen rock gardens and the Yokohama International Horticultural Expo, this tour combines Japan's natural beauty with its rich cultural heritage.

- Stroll through Japan's finest gardens
- Experience the International Horticultural Expo
- Admire iconic Mount Fuji
- Explore Matsumoto & Himeji castles
- Experience a traditional tea ceremony
- Learn the art of 'ikebana' (flower arranging)

TOUR MAP



GARDENS OF JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as listed in the itinerary
- 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

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 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.

'Gardens 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 and trains. 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 Escort is 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:

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 and end the tour on Day 15 in Osaka. 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 the following day.

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**Days 1-2: Fly to Japan**

Meals: D



Fly overnight to the dazzling metropolis of Tokyo, Japan's capital city. Depending on your time of arrival, the rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local culture before this evening's welcome dinner.

Destination Information

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

Day 3: Discover Tokyo

Meals: B, L, D



Spend the day exploring Tokyo, beginning with a stroll through the beautifully landscaped Kiyosumi Gardens.

Continue to historic Asakusa to visit Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple, before taking in sweeping city views from the observation deck at Tokyo Skytree. Later, head to vibrant Shibuya and cross the world-famous Shibuya Scramble Crossing.

Destination Information

Kiyosumi Gardens – Kiyosumi is a tranquil landscape garden in eastern Tokyo, shaped in the late 19th century by the Iwasaki family, founders of Mitsubishi. A broad pond, stepping stones and carefully placed rocks are framed by pines and maples, creating an oasis in the city.

Tokyo Skytree – The iconic 634-metre Skytree is one of the world's tallest towers. Its observation deck offers sweeping views across the vast capital and, on a clear day, towards Mount Fuji.

Senso-ji Temple – Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple was founded in the 7th century. It is dedicated to the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

Shibuya Scramble Crossing – The iconic Shibuya Scramble Crossing, inaugurated in 1973, is the busiest pedestrian interchange in the world, with as many as 3,000 people crossing at one time. Billboards and bright lights abound, and it is often compared to New York's Times Square.

Day 4: Yokohama International Horticultural Expo

Meals: B, L, D



Travel to Yokohama for the 2027 International Horticultural Expo, where you can explore its spectacular celebration of flowers, gardens and horticulture. Discover a colourful world of ten million flowers and plants, alongside inspiring displays showcasing Japan's gardening traditions, innovative design and enduring connection with nature.

Return to Tokyo late this afternoon.

Destination Information

Yokohama - Yokohama is Japan's second-most populous city and one of its most important ports. Once a small fishing village, it developed rapidly after opening to international trade in 1859 and today blends historic waterfront districts with modern architecture, leafy parks and a cosmopolitan atmosphere. The city's port has historically been an important centre for Japan's flower trade.

Yokohama International Horticultural Expo – This international horticultural exhibition is being held in Yokohama from March to September 2027. Bringing together exhibitors from Japan and around the world, the GREEN×EXPO 2027 will showcase gardens, planting, landscape design and new ideas for greener, more sustainable living across a vast exhibition site.

Day 5: Mount Fuji – Gardens & Kimonos

Meals: B, L, D



Hop on the bullet train to Odawara, in the Mount Fuji region. Enjoy time exploring the beautiful surrounding countryside, then admire the huge collection of silk kimonos displayed at the Kubota Itchiku Art Museum. Take some time to explore the museum's gardens, designed by Kubota Itchiku himself, which enjoy lovely views of Mount Fuji on a clear day.

Please note: Due to luggage limitations on the bullet train, your luggage will be transferred directly to Takayama. Please pack an overnight bag for your night in the Mount Fuji region.

Destination Information

Mount Fuji – At 3,776m, Mount Fuji is Japan's highest mountain, and an iconic symbol of the country.

Itchiku Kubota Art Museum – Kubota Itchiku revived the lost art of Tsujigahana silk dyeing, used to decorate elaborate kimono during the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). This small museum exhibits several of his creations, while the gardens, again designed by Kubota Itchiku, are a lovely place to stroll. Visitors can enjoy views of Fuji from the garden on a clear day.

Day 6: Castles & Miso in Matsumoto

Meals: B, L, D



Explore the 16th-century Matsumoto Castle, with its magnificent blue-black facade and fascinating second-floor weapon displays. This impressive castle stands in the heart of the Honmaru Gardens, with its koi-filled moat completing the scene.

Stop at Ishii Miso House to learn about the process of making this famous Japanese seasoning. Drive through the Japanese Alps to reach the charming mountain town of Takayama, beloved for its historic Old Town and friendly, laid-back atmosphere.

Please note: You will need to remove your shoes to access the castle. Please note that there are very steep, polished wooden steps to reach the higher floors. Please take your time and be mindful. If you choose not to look inside the castle, you can enjoy the surrounding gardens and architecture.

Destination Information

Matsumoto Castle – Nicknamed Crow Castle for its black exterior, Matsumoto Castle dates back to the 16th century and is one of the oldest wooden castles in Japan. It is a 'hirajiro', meaning that the castle is built on a plain, rather than a hill or mountain. It has fascinating displays of historic weapons on the second floor.

Ishii Miso – Ishii Miso was founded in 1868 and is still producing miso, a staple Japanese seasoning, using a unique traditional method. Miso is a fermented paste created from a mixture of soybeans, sea salt and rice koji. It is often used in soups, marinades and condiments.

Takayama – One of Japan's most atmospheric townscapes, Takayama is home to many examples of Meiji-era architecture.

Day 7: Takayama

Meals: B, L, D



Stroll along Takayama's charming riverfront, perhaps indulging in the fresh produce at the daily morning market, and admire the old town's lovely traditional houses, which evoke the air of the Edo period. Visit the Festival Floats Museum, where you can see the ornate parade floats used in the town's famous autumn festival.

After lunch, visit the former magistrate's office at Takayama Jinya, then head to a local sake brewery for a tour and tasting of Japan's iconic rice wine.

Later, enjoy some free time to shop in the lovely boutiques along Kamisannomachi Street, brimming with local sweets, crafts and souvenirs.

Destination Information

Miyagawa Morning Market – A number of stalls line the riverfront, selling fresh local fruit, vegetables and other regional produce.

Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall – This hall exhibits some of the ‘yatai’ from Takayama’s famous festival, during which huge, decorated floats are paraded through the streets. Some date as far back as the 17th century.

Takayama Sake Brewery – Takayama’s seven breweries all date back over a century. The tradition of sake brewing in Takayama goes back even further – to a time when local merchants were often paid in rice, which they began to brew into sake as an alternative source of revenue.

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 8: Shirakawa-go & Historic Kanazawa

Meals: B, L, D



Uncover rural Japan at the UNESCO-listed village of Shirakawa-go, famed for its picturesque, thatched farmhouses with their incredibly steep roofs.

After lunch, continue to the small, laid-back city of Kanazawa, known for its heritage of gold leaf production. Take part in a hands-on gold leaf workshop, learning to apply the gold leaf and personalising a small keepsake. Later, stroll through Kanazawa’s traditional Higashi

Chaya (Eastern Teahouse District), stopping to visit a former geisha house.

Destination Information

Shirakawa-go – This charming, UNESCO-listed heritage village is famous for its unusual architectural style, known as Gassho-Zukuri (lit. hands in prayer). The steeply pitched thatched roofs serve two purposes: 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.

Kanazawa – Kanazawa is the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture and is known for its beautiful samurai and geisha districts. It is a quieter city than many others in Japan, and a wonderful place to escape the crowds.

Kanazawa Gold Leaf – Kanazawa produces the vast majority of Japan’s gold leaf and has been associated with the craft for centuries. The delicate sheets are used to decorate everything from temples and lacquerware to ceramics and even food.

Day 9: Kenroku-en Gardens – Echizen – Kyoto

Meals: B, L, D



This morning, explore the beautiful Kenroku-en Garden, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan. Developed by the powerful Maeda family over many generations, it is one of Japan's best examples of a strolling-style landscape garden. Explore the garden, accompanied by one of Kenroku-en's expert on-site guides.

Later, drive to Kyoto, stopping en route to visit the fascinating Echizen Washi Paper Village. Try your hand at making washi paper, and admire the unique displays of paper bonsai models before continuing to Kyoto. Check into your hotel before dinner.

Destination Information

Kenroku-en Garden – One of Japan's 'Three Great Gardens', Kenroku-en dates back 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 Kenroku-en means 'having six features'. These six are spaciousness, tranquillity, artifice, antiquity, water sources and magnificent panoramas.

Echizen Washi Paper Village – Echizen has been producing washi, traditional Japanese handmade paper, for around 1,500 years. Made from the fibres of plants such as paper mulberry, this strong, beautifully textured paper has long been used for calligraphy, screens and decorative arts.

Kyoto – Kyoto was the capital of Japan from 794 until the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s, when the capital moved to Tokyo, then known as Edo. The city is home to many of Japan's national treasures and played a central role in the development of traditions such as the tea ceremony.

Day 10: Kyoto: Bamboo, Bonsai, Temples & Tea

Meals: B, L, D



Start the day at Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, where towering bamboo groves create one of Kyoto's most distinctive landscapes. Continue to the famous Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku-ji, set over a large pond in a beautiful strolling garden, before visiting the bonsai displays and Zen rock garden at Daitoku-ji, an atmospheric temple complex off the beaten path.

After lunch, enjoy an origami taster session before observing one of Kyoto's most celebrated traditions: the age-old rituals of the tea ceremony, performed by an expert.

Destination Information

Arashiyama Bamboo Forest – Arashiyama's famous bamboo grove is one of Kyoto's most atmospheric sights, with a pathway winding through towering stalks of bamboo. The area has been celebrated for its natural beauty for centuries and remains one of the city's most distinctive landscapes.

Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – This Buddhist temple overlooks a pond in a traditional stroll garden. Its top two floors are covered in pure gold leaf, creating one of Kyoto's most iconic sights.

Daitoku-ji Temple Complex – Daitoku-ji is a large Zen Buddhist temple complex in northern Kyoto, founded in the 14th century. It is known for its atmospheric sub-temples, carefully composed rock garden, and a collection of beautiful bonsai trees.

Day 11: Kyoto & Nara

Meals: B, L, D



Visit Fushimi Inari, one of Kyoto's most famous spots. The shrine is renowned for its thousands of red torii gates, which frame a scenic path up the mountain's forested slopes.

Travel to Nara, Japan's former imperial capital and home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Visit Todai-ji Temple and its magnificent 15-metre-tall bronze Buddha, before strolling through Nara Park. The free-

roaming deer here have even learned to bow to visitors!

Continue to the nearby Isui-en Garden, a beautiful example of 'shakkei' (borrowed scenery), where views of the surrounding hills are incorporated into the garden's design. Later, check into your hotel in Nara before dinner.

Destination Information

Fushimi Inari Shrine – An important Shinto shrine in southern Kyoto, Fushimi Inari is famous for its thousands of red 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.

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 eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Todai-ji Temple – The UNESCO-listed Todai-ji 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.

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

Day 12: Nara – Koyasan – Osaka

Meals: B, L, D



Travel south to Japan's most sacred mountain, Koyasan. Home to over 100 monasteries, Mount Koya is the heart of Shingon Buddhism and the resting place of Kobo Daishi, one of Japan's best-known Buddhist monks. Explore the temples here and soak up the atmosphere at Okunoin – a vast cemetery of 200,000 graves, sheltered by a forest of towering cedars and cypress trees.

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

Destination Information

Koyasan – The headquarters of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, Mount Koya is the ideal spot to get a glimpse of Japan's traditional religious life.

Kongobuji Temple – Dating back to the 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.

Okunoin Cemetery – Home to the mausoleum of Kobo Daishi, founder of Shingon Buddhism, Okunoin is the largest cemetery in Japan. Beneath a forest of towering cedar trees, thousands of moss-covered gravestones and memorials create a fascinating and deeply atmospheric setting.

Day 13: Flower Arranging & Free Time in Osaka

Meals: B, L, D



Start the day at the Umeda Sky Building, ascending to its spectacular rooftop observatory for panoramic views across Osaka. Later, enjoy an introductory 'ikebana' lesson, the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging. Learn how balance, form and simplicity are used to create beautiful floral displays with hidden meanings.

Afterwards, experience a different side of the city with a stroll through lively Dotonbori, known for its neon lights, colourful signs and bustling street food scene. After lunch, the afternoon is at leisure to relax, shop or explore Osaka independently until dinner.

Destination Information

Osaka – Osaka is one of Japan's largest cities and has long been an important centre for trade and commerce. Known for its lively atmosphere, excellent food and vibrant entertainment districts, it is one of Japan's most energetic and characterful cities.

Ikebana – Ikebana is the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging, with origins dating back more than 500 years. Rather than simply displaying flowers, it focuses on balance, line, space and seasonality to create elegant, carefully composed arrangements with spiritual symbolism.

Dotonbori – Dotonbori is Osaka’s famous entertainment district, known for its bright neon signs, lively atmosphere and huge choice of restaurants and street food. The area runs alongside the Dotonbori Canal and is one of the city’s best-known areas.

Day 14: Himeji Castle & Koko-en Garden**Meals: B, L, D**

Take a day trip to Himeji to explore its magnificent White Heron Castle, considered one of the most beautiful castles in Japan. Later, visit the neighbouring Koko-en Garden – a series of nine beautiful walled gardens, designed in various styles of the Edo period.

Return to Osaka ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.

Please note: Himeji Castle is largely in its original condition, including steep wooden steps, so please be mindful of your step when strolling around. You will have to remove your shoes before entering. You will be on your feet for several hours during the visit to Himeji.

After the reopening in March 2015, Himeji Castle has welcomed many visitors. As such, they now limit the number of people who can enter the Main Keep at one time, in order to reduce congestion and to protect the castle. Entrance times cannot be prebooked. Please note that this means that there may be long queues outdoors in the busy season.

Destination Information

Himeji Castle – Himeji Castle is Japan’s largest and most famous surviving feudal castle. Dating largely from the early 17th century, it is renowned for its elegant white exterior, complex defensive design and remarkably well-preserved wooden interiors.

Koko-en Garden – Koko-en is made up of nine separate walled gardens. Its landscaped ponds, waterfalls, tea garden and seasonal planting are designed in various styles of the Edo period.

Days 15-16: Departure**Meals: B**

Transfer to the airport for your flight home, arriving the same or following day.

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

Please inform our reservations team of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at the time of booking. Our partners in Japan will only be able to accommodate dietary requirements which have been notified to us in advance of your tour.

JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

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

INSURANCE:

It is a condition of your booking that you are insured for the duration of your trip. We recommend comprehensive travel insurance to cover cancellation, medical requirements, luggage, repatriations and additional expenses. At a minimum, the policy is required to cover medical requirements including medical evacuations / repatriations. The choice of insurer is yours. We strongly suggest you purchase insurance at the time you pay your deposit. This is because cancellation fees and charges are payable from that time.

We may request you to provide evidence that you have taken out and paid for a policy to comply with this condition. If you fail to provide a certificate of currency of insurance within a reasonable time after our request, then this will be deemed a cancellation by you and standard cancellation fees will apply.

EATING IN JAPAN:

For Go Beyond tours most meals are included (excluding drinks), please see your day-to-day itinerary for details on which meals are included. On all Group tours, Extensions and Pre & Post Stays, no refund will be given for any meals missed due to your flight timings, or personal choice.

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.

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.

Tea and coffee facilities are not always available in all hotels so consider bringing your own supply of coffee and tea bags.

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

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 New Zealand 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 our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portering 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 always be met on arrival by English-speaking staff and transferred 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-minute walk)
- Chartered coach (if there are more than 8 Wendy Wu Tours passengers arriving at the same time)

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 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 18 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. Traditionally, the polite method of gifting money in Japan is to use an envelope (available at convenience stores or occasionally hotel receptions); however, this is not required.

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 fairly regular occasions when they must be removed. Socks with grip are useful at sites like castles with steep wooden steps.

In shops, there is a small coin tray at the till. This is where you should place your money and collect any change, rather than handing it directly to the assistant. If the card machine is behind the desk, do the same with your card. Shaking hands is not typical in Japan. Instead, stand and bow slightly (about 15 degrees) from the waist. Do not put your hands together prayer-style as in some other Asian countries.

Two essential phrases: Please = Kudasai. Thank you: Arigatou or Arigatou gozaimasu.

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. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

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 NZD300 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 Australian Dollars can be exchanged at Narita Airport and in some hotels, provided the Australian 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 involve climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense 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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