



Gems of Japan & Shikoku

Classic Tour | 16 Days | Physical Level 1

Tokyo (3N) – Shizuoka (1N) – Kyoto (3N) – Hiroshima (2N) – Matsuyama (1N) –
Takamatsu (2N) – Naoshima – Osaka (1N)

Discover Japan's many contrasts – from the rolling hills of Shikoku to Tokyo's dazzling skyline and Kyoto's timeless grace. Along the way, you'll meet an apprentice geisha, wander fragrant citrus farms, and explore Naoshima's world of contemporary art beside the tranquil waters of the Seto Inland Sea. You'll also pay your respects at Hiroshima, enjoy the majesty of Mount Fuji, and experience a traditional tea ceremony.

- Discover Shikoku's untouched shores
- Dine at a Buddhist temple
- Meet an apprentice geisha
- Explore Naoshima's art scene
- Soak in Japan's oldest onsen
- Visit lush tea and citrus farms

TOUR MAP



GEMS OF JAPAN & SHIKOKU 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 National Escorts 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.

‘Gems of Japan & Shikoku’ falls under Physical Level 1. 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 and boats. Occasional longer walks may be included.

Sightseeing may often involve walking for a reasonable duration, sometimes over multiple steps, or uneven surfaces. You will be required to get on and off the boat in Tokyo Bay without assistance, and navigate multiple steep, polished wooden staircases in socks if you wish to explore inside Himeji Castle. Socks with grip are recommended for this site.

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:

The tour is 22 days in duration including overnight international flights in both directions as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand. Please note, some flights may depart and arrive on Day 2.

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

Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo (arrive into either Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda airport) and end the tour on Day 15 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 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 Tokyo

Meals: D

Arrive in Tokyo, Japan's buzzing capital city. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transfer approximately to your hotel.

Please note: You will be transferred by shared coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour. Early check in is not included. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your Reservations consultant.



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: Tokyo Past & Present

Meals: B, L, D

Uncover Tokyo's origins at the Open-Air Architectural Park, where preserved homes and public buildings offer a glimpse into a bygone era. Stroll among restored homes, izakayas and bathhouses that capture the charm of old Tokyo.

After lunch, enjoy the modern-day buzz of Shibuya Scramble Crossing, then ascend Shibuya Sky to take in views of the city's glittering skyline. Stop by Shinjuku's iconic Godzilla landmark en route back to your hotel.



Destination Information

Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Garden – Set in Koganei Park on the outskirts of Tokyo, this open-air museum offers a nostalgic walk through Tokyo's past. It features 30 carefully restored buildings – traditional homes, an old izakaya, a classic public bathhouse, and a welcoming ryokan. Visitors can step inside each building for a glimpse into a bygone era.

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.

Shibuya Sky – High above Shibuya Crossing, this rooftop observatory offers sweeping, open-air views of Tokyo's skyline.

Godzilla Head – This rooftop sculpture of Japan's beloved movie monster looms over Shinjuku's Kabukicho district, adding a fun, slightly surreal flair to the buzzing entertainment district.

Day 4: Art & Heritage of Tokyo

Meals: B, L, D

Begin at the Sumida District's Hokusai Museum, celebrating the legendary 19th-century artist whose work 'The Great Wave' brought Japan's ukiyo-e art style to global fame.

After lunch, delve deeper into the city's story at the newly renovated Edo-Tokyo Museum. Explore vivid dioramas and trace Tokyo's evolution from Edo into the vibrant metropolis of today.



In the afternoon, return to the hotel. Alternatively, on select May & September departures, witness Japan's national sport at the thrilling Tokyo Sumo Tournament!

Destination Information

Katsushika Hokusai — Hokusai (1760–1849) was a celebrated Japanese artist, best known for *The Great Wave*. A master of ukiyo-e woodblock prints, he captured everyday life, landscapes, and legends with bold colour and movement, leaving a lasting influence on art around the world.

Edo-Tokyo Museum — Reopening in spring 2026, this major museum explores the evolution of Tokyo, from its days as Edo to the city we know today. With detailed models, interactive displays, and striking full-scale reconstructions, it offers a glimpse into how the capital's culture, daily life, and urban landscape have transformed over time.

Day 5: Mount Fuji & the Green Tea Fields of Shizuoka

Meals: B, L, D

Drive to Shizuoka Prefecture, famous for its green tea farms. Visit a tea plantation and enjoy a morning cup of green tea before lunch. This afternoon, head to the Mount Fuji World Heritage Centre to learn about Japan's most iconic mountain.

Continue to the seaside city of Shizuoka and enjoy 360-degree views of Fuji and the Japanese coastline from Nihondaira Yume Terrace. Overnight in Shizuoka.

**Destination Information**

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

Shizuoka Tea Plantations — Shizuoka is Japan's leading tea-producing region, responsible for more than a third of the country's green tea harvest. Its sweeping hills of bright green tea bushes offer beautiful views of Mount Fuji.

Nihondaira Yume Terrace — This beautifully designed wooden observatory offers views of Mt. Fuji and the waters of Suruga Bay.

Day 6: Miso Factory – Railway Park – Bullet Train to Kyoto

Meals: B, L, D

Drive to Okazaki to visit a historic miso factory, which has been producing hacho miso for more than five centuries. This style of miso is thicker and purer than other styles, resulting in a rich umami flavour which you can savour at lunch.

Continue to Nagoya's SCMaglev and Railway Park to discover Japan's world-renowned rail heritage. Step inside historic carriages, admire full-scale bullet trains, and see how cutting-edge technology has shaped high-speed travel. Later, experience it for yourself aboard the shinkansen to Kyoto, your home for the next three nights.



Please note that your luggage will be transferred separately to your hotel in Kyoto and arrive later the same day.

Destination Information

Hatcho-style Miso – A traditional dark miso from Okazaki, Aichi, Hatcho miso is aged for years under heavy stones, giving it a bold, earthy flavor. Often used in hearty soups, it's known for its rich, distinctive character.

Nagoya – This coastal city has been an industrial hub for Japan since the Meiji Restoration and is the home of many automotive and tech companies.

SCMaglev & Railway Park – This fascinating museum traces Japan's railway journey, from its earliest steam locomotives to the next generation of magnetic levitation trains at the SCMaglev and Railway Park in Nagoya. Through beautifully preserved trains and engaging dioramas, see how the nation's famous train networks have evolved from heritage to high-speed future.

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years, until it was moved to Tokyo (then called Edo) by the newly-restored emperor in the late 1860s. Now a popular tourist destination, Kyoto still retains its historic charms and its proudly maintained ancient temples.

Day 7: Tea Ceremony – Kinkaku-ji – Lunch with a Geisha – Ryoan-ji

Meals: B, L, D

Immerse yourself in Kyoto's ancient culture. Begin your day with a morning tea ceremony, observing its historic rituals, then head to the photogenic Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku-ji.

At lunchtime, enjoy a visit from a very special guest: a maiko, or apprentice geisha! Geisha are increasingly hard to spot in Kyoto, so this is a fascinating opportunity for a glimpse into their secretive world.



Continue to Ryoan-ji, a Zen temple famed for its beautiful rock garden, before returning to your hotel.

Destination Information

Maiko – A maiko is an apprentice geisha, recognisable by her vibrant kimono, elaborate hairstyle, and distinctive makeup.

Ryoan-ji – 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.

Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – This Buddhist temple sits over a pond in a classical garden of the 'go round' style. The top two floors are covered in pure gold leaf.

Day 8: Kyoto

Meals: B, L, D

Begin the morning in Arashiyama's famous bamboo forest, where towering thickets create a serene atmosphere. Admire the historic Togetsu-kyo Bridge before visiting Tenryu-ji Temple, renowned for its tranquil pond.



Enjoy a temple-style lunch at its Bib Gourmand-listed restaurant, then spend the afternoon at leisure, relaxing or exploring Kyoto independently.

Your afternoon is at leisure to rest and relax or discover more of Kyoto – your way!

Destination Information

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

Togetsu-kyo Bridge – The wooden Togetsukyo Bridge has been a central landmark in Kyoto's Arashiyama District for over 400 years. The bridge spans the Katsura River in front of Arashiyama Mountain.

Tenryu-ji Temple Restaurant – Located within Tenryu-ji's peaceful temple grounds, Shigetsu serves traditional shojin ryori – seasonal, plant-based Buddhist cuisine. Meals are beautifully arranged and enjoyed in tatami rooms overlooking the garden.

Day 9: Via Koko-en Gardens to Hiroshima

Meals: B, L, D

Bid farewell to Kyoto and hop on the bullet train for a 45-minute journey to Himeji. Stop by Himeji Castle for photos, then head to the lovely Koko-en Gardens nearby. Later, board another bullet train and whizz your way an hour to Hiroshima.



Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for tonight. Due to the bullet train's limited suitcase capacity, and to ensure your hands-free enjoyment of Himeji, your main luggage will be transferred to Hiroshima separately (max one suitcase per person), arriving at your hotel the following day.

Please note: The visit to Himeji Castle is external only. However, you will have the opportunity to see the interior of another castle in Matsuyama, built in the same period. The castle in Matsuyama is more accessible, and unlike Himeji, contains inside exhibitions.

Destination Information

Himeji – Himeji is the second-largest city of Hyogo Prefecture after Kobe, with approximately half a million inhabitants. It is most famous for its magnificent castle.

Himeji Castle – Widely considered Japan's most magnificent castle for its imposing size and beauty, the well-preserved Himeji Castle is a world heritage listed treasure. Floors are unfurnished.

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.

Day 10: Hiroshima Peace Park & Miyajima Island

Meals: B, L, D

Spend the morning in reflection at the poignant Peace Memorial Park and Museum, paying homage to the victims of the 1945 atomic bomb. After lunch, board a ferry to the lovely island of Miyajima, with free time to admire its 'floating' Torii Gate on the edge of the Seto Inland Sea. Return to Hiroshima before dinner.



Enjoy some free time to explore the island's main shopping street. During your free time, you might like to purchase the local speciality - *momiji manju*, a confectionery shaped like a maple leaf and filled with sweet bean paste, chocolate, matcha or custard. Return to Hiroshima on the mainland before dinner.

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

Destination Information

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.

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

Miyajima – Miyajima is a small island off the coast of Hiroshima. Officially named Itsukushima, the island is more commonly referred to as Miyajima. It is famous for its beautiful torii gate, which at high tide seems to float on the water.

Day 11: Across the Inland Sea to Shikoku

Meals: BLD

Bid farewell to Honshu and take the ferry from Hiroshima to Shikoku, one of Japan's four main islands. Often overlooked by travellers, mountainous Shikoku rewards those who visit with rich culture and quiet charm.

Arrive in Matsuyama and hop on the cable car to explore its historic hilltop castle before lunch. This afternoon, visit Dogo Onsen Honkan, Japan's oldest hot spring, to soak in its soothing waters before dinner.



Please note that onsen bathing is gender segregated. Clothes, including swimwear/underwear, are not permitted. Unlike many onsens, Dogo Onsen Honkan has no restrictions on tattoos. Guests who do not wish to participate in the onsen bathing are welcome to spend time at leisure in Matsuyama.

Destination Information

Matsuyama – This charming city, nestled between the mountains and the Seto Inland Sea, is the capital of Ehime Prefecture, and while small, is the largest city on Shikoku. It is most famous for its historic hot springs.

Matsuyama Castle – Reached by cable car, this 17th-century hilltop fortress is one of just twelve original castles left in Japan. Its multi-story wooden keep, stone walls, and winding defensive paths are a classic example of Edo-period design.

Dogo Onsen Honkan – This ornate, tiered wooden bathhouse is one of Japan's oldest and most culturally significant hot springs. The springs themselves are over 3,000 years old, while the wooden bathhouse was built in 1894; it inspired the bathhouse in the famous Studio Ghibli film 'Spirited Away'.

Day 12: Citrus Farm – Ritsurin Garden – Takamatsu

Meals: BLD

Begin the day at Mount Kiroso Observatory, admiring sweeping views of the tiny green islands that stud the Seto Inland Sea. Continue to one of Shikoku's famed citrus farms to pick your own mikan orange and savour the sweet, bright flavour of this local speciality.



Later, enjoy a scenic drive across the island to Ritsurin Garden, a masterpiece of ponds, bridges, and manicured pines. Stroll its serene paths before checking in at your hotel in the port city of Takamatsu.

Please note: If your visit falls on a bank holiday or other closed day, your visit to Ritsurin Garden may be swapped to Day 14, before your drive to Osaka.

Destination Information

Takamatsu – A laid-back port city on Shikoku's northeastern coastline, known for its waterfront views, mellow pace, and easy access to nearby art islands.

Ritsurin Garden – This beautiful garden was begun in the late 16th century, and finally completed in 1745. It is made up of six lakes and thirteen landscaped hills, and designed for strolling. Each corner brings a new and changing view.

Day 13: Naoshima & Benesse House

Meals: BLD

Enjoy a day trip to the little isle of Naoshima, foremost among Japan's 'Art Islands'.

A scenic, hour-long ferry ride brings you to Miyanoura Port on the west coast. Visit the island's premier gallery, Benesse House, to explore its blend of indoor exhibits and open-air installations set against sea views. Among its most iconic works is Yayoi Kusama's polka-dot 'Yellow Pumpkin' sculpture, a symbol of modern Japanese art.



After lunch, explore more art around Miyanoura Port, before returning to Takamatsu.

Destination Information

Naoshima – This tiny island in the Inland Sea is famous for its bold, colourful art installations. The towering palms, sandy shores and blue waters create a serene, almost tropical atmosphere.

Benesse Art Site – The famous Benesse House Museum showcases thought-provoking contemporary art in beautiful spaces. Its light-filled gallery, open-air sculptures, and quiet coastal paths offer a peaceful, contemplative art experience.

‘Yellow Pumpkin’ – Yayoi Kusama’s playful, polka-dot *Yellow Pumpkin* has become an emblem of Naoshima. Set by the water, it captures her signature mix of whimsy, repetition, and striking visual impact. Kusama, born in 1929, is one of Japan’s most famous modern artists.

Day 14: Festival Dances, Whirlpools & Osaka**Meals: B**

Journey one hour to Tokushima, on Shikoku's eastern coast, to visit the Awa Odori Festival Museum. Here, learn about the meaning and history of this joyous festival, and even enjoy an energetic live performance by local dancers, who will perform the festival dance in traditional costume.



After lunch, continue to the Naruto Strait to view its famous whirlpools (tide permitting) from a walkway above the swirling currents. Drive across Awaji Island to Osaka, our final stop, and check in at your hotel ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.

Destination Information

Awa Odori Festival Museum – This lively museum tells the story of Tokushima’s famous Awa Odori festival, known for its rhythmic dancing and joyful festival spirit, through exhibits and energetic live demonstrations.

Naruto Strait Whirlpools – Tidal currents between Shikoku and Awaji Island create swirling whirlpools just off the coast. Tide permitting, these fascinating currents are visible from the glass bridge above.

Day 15-16: Depart Osaka**Meals: B**

Unless you have booked additional nights in Japan, any time before your flight is at leisure before transferring to the airport for your flight home.



Please note: You may be transferred by shared coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour. If you are on a shared coach transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to your pick-up point. In this case, your guide will distribute transfer tickets in advance.

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

EXTEND YOUR TRIP: Wendy Wu Tours offers additional night options as well as sightseeing packages such as Nara. Contact your Reservations Consultant in advance of your trip to learn all about our many extension options.

GEMS OF JAPAN & SHIKOKU 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:

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. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our **Classic** group tours from dinner on the day arrival until the morning 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 - practising is advised, as Western cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

It is imperative that you clearly communicate any and all dietary needs when booking, and don't forget to reaffirm them during your welcome briefing with your tour guide. However, it is crucial to understand that local restaurants might face limitations in accommodating specific dietary requests, particularly in the cases of gluten-free, celiac, or vegan requirements. Please bear in mind that finding gluten-free options may not be as effortless as it is in New Zealand. Regrettably, we cannot assure that the food served will be entirely free from allergens.

For your convenience, generally, at the end of a long travelling day your meal will be at the hotel restaurant or nearby local restaurant. 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. Water is included with meals, but other drinks are at personal expense. 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 in Japanese culture. Please note, double bed requests can be made at the time of booking but cannot be guaranteed; twin beds are more common in Asia.

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 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, 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 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 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 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 (excluding between Kyoto and Nagoya, when your luggage will arrive the same day.) 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 minimum 10 travellers 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 or expected, 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 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, 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.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

If you are travelling within Japanese public holidays, please note that celebrations can last a couple of days. During these times some businesses will be closed. Coach 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 TOURING:

Personal Expenses – 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 number of steps. These castles 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 polished wooden steps tend to be quite steep, narrow, uneven 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 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 2025