

Japan Uncovered

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 1

OSAKA – NARA – HIMEJI – HIROSHIMA – MIYAJIMA – KYOTO – KANAZAWA – TAKAYAMA – YUDANAKA – NAGANO – MOUNT FUJI – MISHIMA – TOKYO

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

- Discover delightful Kyoto & Nara
- Reflect in Hiroshima & Miyajima
- Admire beautiful Mount Fuji
- Search for the Snow Monkeys
- Feel the rush of Tokyo & Osaka
- Explore Kanazawa & Takayama

TOUR MAP



JAPAN UNCOVERED 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 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.

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

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

Our National 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 18 days in duration including international flights or 16 days in duration based on ‘Land Only’.

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 Osaka and end the tour on Day 17 in Tokyo. 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.

- Please note: the Isui-en Garden in Nara, visited on day 3, is closed for maintenance weekly on Tuesdays. Departures coinciding with this will visit the Kasuga Taisha Shrine as an alternative.

Day 1-2: Osaka Meals: D

Fly overnight to the lively, fast-paced city of Osaka. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transferred to your hotel.



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 bus transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to your hotel.

Early check in (before 3pm) is not included. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your reservations consultant.

Destination Information

Osaka – Osaka (formerly called Naniwa) is Japan's third-largest city, with a population of over 2.7 million. It is the economic powerhouse of the Kansai region, known for its bright lights, vibrant downtown district, and many urban canals.

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

Drive approximately one hour to Japan's former imperial capital, Nara, home to 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Sightseeing here will be about 3 hours on foot, and may include a walk of up to 15 minutes from the coach parking area. Look out for the park's beautiful resident sika deer, who have learned to bow to visitors!



Visit Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest wooden structure. This temple is home to the Daibutsu, an eighth-century bronze Buddha standing almost 15 metres tall. Continue to Isui-en Garden, known for its natural ponds. Please note that if your visit falls on a Tuesday, you may instead visit the neighbouring Yoshiki-en Gardens or a similar site instead. Opening days can vary throughout the year.

Return to Osaka and visit the famous Osaka Castle, the city's most iconic landmark.

Destination Information

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

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 rear garden, the larger of the two, was built in 1899 by a wealthy merchant.

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

Day 4: Himeji Castle Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately two hours west to Himeji. Visit the magnificent Himeji Castle, one of Japan's most impressive feudal-era forts. Afterwards, take a stroll through Koko-en, an Edo-style garden just across the castle moat. After lunch, continue around 3.5 hours to Hiroshima.



Please note: The 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 3-3.5 hours during the visit.

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. In very rare cases, some visitors may not be allowed to enter the Main Keep.

Destination Information

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

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

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

Day 5: Explore Hiroshima

Meals: B, L, D



Begin with a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum, where you will have the opportunity to pay homage to the victims of the 1945 atomic bomb. Please be aware that the museum may be confronting and upsetting for some group members; it is at your discretion if you wish to visit or spend time at leisure exploring the Peace Memorial Park.

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

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

Destination Information

Peace Memorial Park and Museum – The park is one of the most prominent features of the city. The trees, lawns and walking paths are in stark contrast to the surrounding downtown area. Before the atomic bomb was dropped, this area was the political and commercial heart of the city, and is why it was chosen as the target.

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

Day 6: Bullet Train to Kyoto — Meals: B, L, D

This morning, transfer to Hiroshima Station and catch a bullet train to Kyoto, a journey of 1 hour 40 minutes. This enchanting city was the capital for over a thousand years, and remains the epitome of traditional Japan. Visit Ryoan-ji, the 'temple of the peaceful dragon', and the famous Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku-ji.



Today's sightseeing in Kyoto will include approximately 3 hours on foot.

As with much of Japan, you will need to remove your shoes at multiple sites around Kyoto.

Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for tonight. Your main luggage will be transferred separately to your Kyoto hotel, arriving the following day (max one suitcase per person).

Destination Information

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan from 794 until the 1860s, when it was moved to Tokyo (then Edo) following the Meiji Restoration. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto.

Ryoan-ji Temple – Ryoan-ji Temple is a Zen temple renowned for its garden, which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles. The garden has fifteen stones, cleverly arranged so that one rock is always hidden from view at any angle. Fifteen is considered the number of perfection; 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 7: Japanese Tea Ceremony Meals: B, L, D



Start the day by visiting the spectacular Kiyomizu Temple, where you will spend 1.5 hours on foot. Be sure to admire the impressive views of Kyoto from the balcony. Later, head back into the city to witness the age-old rituals of a traditional tea ceremony.

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

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

Destination Information

Kiyomizu-dera - The "Pure Water Temple" was founded on the site of Otowa Waterfall in 780. The temple is famous for its wooden stage, jutting out 13 metres above the hillside. The numerous cherry and maple trees below offer a beautiful sea of colours in spring and autumn.

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

Day 8: Travel to Kanazawa Meals: B, L, D



Depart Kyoto and travel around 4 hours by coach to Kanazawa.

After lunch in a local restaurant, wander through the beautiful Kenroku-en Garden before visiting a historic samurai house.

Continue to your hotel and check in.

Destination Information

Kanazawa – Kanazawa is the capital of the 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.

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 being spaciousness, tranquillity, artifice, antiquity, water sources and magnificent panoramas.

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

Day 9: Washi Paper Making

Meals: B, L, D

Drive around 1.5 hours to Gokayama, where you can try your hand at making washi paper, a famous product of the Gifu region.



After lunch, visit the charming, UNESCO-listed village of Shirakawa-go, famous for its beautiful old farmhouses in the 'gassho-zukuri' style, easily recognised by their steeply thatched roofs.

Finally, drive around 1.5 hours to reach the quaint mountain town of Takayama.

Check into your hotel with onsen facilities.

Please note, some hotels in this area are not accessible by coach. You may need to walk with your luggage for 5 minutes from the parking area.

Destination Information

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

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

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

Day 10: Explore Takayama

Meals: B, L, D



Take a morning walking tour of Takayama. During the Edo period, this lovely mountain town was a hub for craftsmen, farmers and merchants from the surrounding mountains. Head to the Miyagawa Morning Market, where you can sample some of the delicious local fruits and vegetables (at your own expense).

Later, take a leisurely stroll around the traditional houses of the area and visit Takayama Jinya. If local opening hours permit, you will also visit the Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall.

After lunch, enjoy the afternoon at leisure to explore the town or take advantage of the hotel's onsen facilities.

Destination Information

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

Takayama Jinya – A former government office dating back to the Edo Period, Takayama Jinya is the only remaining example of its type. The main work of the office was to handle legal cases and tax collection. It has a variety of interesting displays, including a fireman's kimono.

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

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

Day 11: Travel to Nagano Meals: B, L, D



Depart Takayama and drive through the Japanese Alps, enjoying the mountain scenery en route to Matsumoto. Explore the formidable 16th-century Matsumoto Castle, nicknamed 'Crow Castle' for its intense black exterior. Afterwards, head to a miso house and learn about the process of making this famous Japanese seasoning.

From here, drive 1.5 hours to Nagano and check in at your hotel.

Please note: You will need to walk approximately 15 minutes on flat road to reach the castle from the coach parking area. 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 of those coming the other way. If you choose not to look inside the castle, you can enjoy the surrounding gardens and architecture.

Destination Information

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

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

Nagano – Nagano is a gateway city at the edge of the Japanese Alps, and was one of the host cities of the 1998 Winter Olympics. The Olympic Games were the driving force behind the decision to extend Japan's bullet train network to include Nagano.

Day 12: Snow Monkeys Meals: B, L, D



Enjoy some time at leisure to explore the charming town of Obuse, known for its chestnuts and apple-flavoured snacks. Later, drive to Yudanaka in search of the snow monkeys (Japanese Macaques) at Jigokudani Monkey Park. Good shoes are required. Enjoy a gentle trek through the sloping valley (up to 30 minutes each way) to reach the monkey pool, and watch them bathe and play in the warm waters.

Return to Nagano.

Please note: From the parking area to the main snow monkey pool at Yudanaka, you will need to walk around 30-40 minutes each way through the sloping forested valley. Good shoes are required, and the start and end points of the trail are steeper than the main walk; paths may be slippery after rain or snow. Please keep in mind that the snow monkeys are wild and sighting them is never guaranteed, particularly during the breeding season which runs from late September through to November. If you do not wish to walk through the valley, you will be able to wait in the café area near to the coach park.

Destination Information

Jigokudani Yaen-Koen – Home to Japanese Macaques, also known as Snow Monkeys, Jigokudani literally means 'hell's valley'. It is named this because of the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the ground. It is in the baths of this hot water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak. The monkeys live in large social groups and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions.

Obuse – The lovely town of Obuse was a prosperous town in the Edo period, popular with artists such as Hokusai, most famous for his work 'The Great Wave of Kanagawa'. Hokusai lived here for several years under the patronage of fellow artist Takai Kozan. Today, Obuse's narrow streets are a delight to wander, with various shops selling chestnuts and apple-themed snacks for which the town is famous.

Day 13: Mount Fuji Meals: B, L, D



Today, drive approximately 3.5 hours south, passing through the foothills of the iconic Mount Fuji. On arrival, drive up to Fuji's 5th Station for spectacular mountain vistas.

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

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

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.

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

Day 14: Explore Hakone Meals: B, L, D



This morning, transfer to Hakone, a drive of around 2 hours. Enjoy a short cruise on the peaceful waters of Lake Ashi before boarding the Hakone ropeway to soar over the hilltops to the volcanic Owakudani Valley.

After lunch, continue around 2 hours to Japan's capital, the iconic city of Tokyo.

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

Destination Information

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

Hakone Shrine – Hakone Shrine stands at the foot of Mount Hakone, along the shores of Lake Ashi. The shrine buildings are hidden in the dense forest, but are well advertised by its huge torii gates, one standing prominently in the lake and two others over the main street of Moto-Hakone.

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

Day 15: Discover Tokyo

Meals: B, L, D



Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its busy, high-tech façade and you will find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore. This morning, see the famous Shibuya Crossing, perhaps the most recognisable site in Japan.

According to the day of your visit, you will also visit either the East Gardens of the Imperial Palace, or see the Imperial Plaza with Nijubashi Bridge. *The gardens are closed on Mondays, Fridays, and occasionally Tuesdays.*

You will be on your feet for 4 hours today.

This afternoon, you will enjoy some time at leisure to relax or explore before dinner.

Please note, on some May and September departures, there is an extra special addition to day 15: a sumo tournament. Many of Japan's most ancient traditions are preserved in the sport, and the rituals involved in its performance are as fascinating to watch as the wrestling itself. Tickets to the sumo tournament are subject to availability and are not guaranteed.

Destination Information

Shibuya 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. The crossing regularly features in films and other media, and is one of Tokyo's most recognisable sites.

Day 16: Tokyo Panorama Meals: B, L, D



Start your day in Tokyo with a stroll in the Asakusa district, where you can admire the impressive Sensoji Temple and look out for souvenirs in Nakamise Shopping Street.

Continue to the 634-metre Skytree and ascend to the observation deck for magnificent views.

You will be on your feet for 3-4 hours this morning before lunch.

This afternoon, enjoy some time at leisure.

This evening, drive from the hotel to the jetty to embark on a farewell dinner cruise. *You will need to be able to embark and disembark your boat this evening without assistance, and may be required to remove your shoes for the cruise.*

Destination Information

Asakusa – Asakusa is the centre of Tokyo's Shitamachi (Old Town) District, where you can get a glimpse of historic Tokyo.

Senso-ji Temple – Senso-ji 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 Skytree – The tallest structure in Japan, the earthquake-resistant Tokyo Skytree is predominantly a television and radio broadcast tower. It offers wonderful views over the vast metropolis of Tokyo.

Day 17-18: Depart Tokyo 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, arriving the following day.

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

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.

JAPAN UNCOVERED 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 in New Zealand.

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

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. In the Fuji area, hotels tend to be more traditional in style and culture. In this area, you may be asked to take your shoes off at the door and store them in a secure locker – this is very traditional Japanese culture. Please note, double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality 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 Japan at various times during the day. You will be met on arrival at the airport by an English-speaking assistant who will provide instructions for you to make your own way to your hotel using the direct airport bus. Please note the bus will be shared with other passengers and is not just for Wendy Wu Tours clients.

If your hotel is more than a 5-minute walk from the drop-off bus stop, a taxi will be arranged for you prior to leaving the airport to meet you at the drop-off bus stop.

When you check-in to your hotel, a welcome letter will be provided with details of the group's welcome dinner or first meeting point. You will meet your national escort at dinner or, if arriving late, the following morning after breakfast at the welcome meeting.

On your departure day, you will be provided with tickets for your return airport bus, to make your own way to the airport.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in 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 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. Your National Escort will advise you of some of these other customs at the beginning of your tour.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

If you are travelling within the below Japan public holidays, please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed. Coach, air and train travel may also be affected. Tourist attractions will be open; but may be crowded. Showa Day is on 29th April every year, which will start Golden Week which then runs from 29th April – 5th May, Constitution Memorial Day is on 3rd May, and Emperor's Birthday is on 23rd February every year.

SOUVENIRS:

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

LUGGAGE:

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

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

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. 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 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