

Journey Through Japan

Classic Tour | 15 Days | Physical Level 1

SAPPORO – SHIRAOI – HAKODATE – HIROSAKI – KAKUNODATE – TSUNAGI – SENDAI – NIKKO – TOKYO – HAKONE – KYOTO – OSAKA

Along with the must-see sites on the island of Honshu and a day trip to Nikko, this is a tour of varying landscapes as it journeys south from Hokkaido uncovering the charming cities of Sapporo, Otaru and Hakodate.

- Discover the northern island of Hokkaido
- Spend the night in a ryokan and bathe in the warm waters of an onsen
- Explore the culture filled town of Nikko
- Admire breathtaking Mount Fuji
- Explore Japan's history in Kyoto
- Visit a sake brewery

TOUR MAP



JOURNEY THROUGH JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditures e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Japan on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you will travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional 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.

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

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

Our National 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 15 days in duration including international flights or 13 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 Sapporo and end the tour on Day 14 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 at breakfast the following morning.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Day 1-2: Fly overnight to Sapporo Meals: D



Fly to Sapporo, the capital of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative. Transfer approximately 1 hour by shared coach to your hotel.

Please note that you will be required to remove your shoes to visit some sites in Japan. Removing shoes is a typical requirement in many venues, including temples, tea houses, cultural venues, traditional boats and even some restaurants. Bare feet are not usually accepted. Therefore, we recommend carrying a spare pair of socks in your day bag throughout your time in Japan.

Destination Information

Sapporo – The capital of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, Sapporo is known as a winter wonderland after it was introduced to the world during the Winter Olympics which were held in the city in 1972. Sapporo is also one of the nation's youngest major cities and is famous for the Snow Festival held annually in February.

Hokkaido – Visitors to Hokkaido are often surprised to learn that the island is technically only recently part of Japan, having been annexed and colonised in 1869, following the events of the Meiji Restoration (the return of power to the hands of the Emperor, instead of the military government of the Shogunate, which wielded true power for more than 200 years). Before it was annexed, Hokkaido was called Ezochi by the Japanese, and Kai by the native Ainu people. Hokkaido means 'northern sea route'. Its annexation was intended to provide Japan with a buffer against Russian expansion.

Day 3: Ascend Okurayama Meals: B, L, D



In the morning, visit the Okurayama Viewing Point and take a 5-minute chair lift to the top of the Sapporo Winter Olympics Ski Jump to enjoy the breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains.

Transfer around 1 hour to the pretty port town of Otaru, where you can enjoy strolling along the canal and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

Return to the hotel. This evening, enjoy a Genghis Khan dinner, a Sapporo specialty of BBQ lamb (other meats and vegetables will be available for those who do not like lamb, but you must advise in advance).

Destination Information

Okurayama Viewing Point – The Okurayama viewing point sits at the top of the 1972 Winter Olympic ski jump, which is still home to many international competitions. From the top you can enjoy stunning panoramic views of Sapporo and Ishikari Bay.

Otaru – Otaru is a small harbour city northwest of Sapporo. Its beautifully preserved canal area gives Otaru's city centre a distinctive character, reminiscent of past decades. It was once a hub for fishing and international trade, hence the many old warehouses dotted near the water. Though most commerce has now shifted to nearby Sapporo, Otaru is still home to one of the country's top-ranked business universities, with around 2,500 students.

Day 4: Travel to Hakodate Meals: B, L, D

Depart Sapporo and drive around 90 minutes south to a lovely lakeside spot to visit the Upopoy National Ainu Museum. Here, delve into the fascinating culture of Hokkaido's indigenous people, the Ainu, who lived here long before the island was annexed by Japan. Today, the Ainu are a minority among Japan's population. The Upopoy museum was established in order to promote wider understanding of Ainu history and culture.



After lunch, board a limited express train and travel 2.5 hours to the harbour city of Hakodate. Check in at the hotel before dinner.

This evening, board the Hakodate ropeway cable car for magnificent views over the illuminated city (weather permitting).

Please note: You will need to pack a small overnight bag for tonight, as your main luggage will be transferred directly from Sapporo to your hotel in Aomori, arriving the following day.
Please note: Based on feedback from previous clients, Noboribetsu Jigokudani (the sulphur valley) has been removed from this itinerary. Instead, guests will enjoy additional time at the Ainu Museum. This change has been made in line with guest feedback with the aim of enhancing your overall experience.

Destination Information

Ainu people – The Ainu people were historically the indigenous population of Hokkaido and some of the surrounding islands. Formerly a hunter-gatherer population with animist beliefs, they were subjected to forced assimilation into Japanese life after Emperor Meiji annexed the island in 1869. Estimates suggest there are around 25,000 known Ainu remaining; there may be many more who have no knowledge of their ancestry. In 1997, the Ainu won a landmark court case granting them the right to enjoy their distinct culture and traditions, which had been repressed for over a century.

Upopoy National Ainu Museum – Ainu identity is a valuable part of Japan's diversity, characterised by its unique language, rich storytelling tradition, and deep relationship with 'kamuy' (spirit deities). Explore Ainu culture through the museum's wealth of exhibits, including a number of tools, hunting weapons and clothing, adorned with beautiful patterns.

Hakodate – Hakodate is located on Hokkaido's southern tip. It is known for its delicious, fresh seafood. Hakodate was one of the first Japanese harbour cities to be opened to international trade after the country's era of isolation, and as such has experienced notable foreign influence.

Day 5: **Explore Hakodate Asaichi** Meals: B, L, D



Start the day by strolling through Hakodate's bustling morning market, where hundreds of stores and stalls sell fresh local produce, seafood and the odd souvenir before ascending Goryokaku Tower for views over Goryokaku Fort and Mount Hakodate from the observation deck.

After lunch, transfer to the train station and take a 1-hour bullet train to the city of Aomori in the north of Honshu, Japan's largest island. On arrival in Aomori, visit the Nebuta Warasse Museum, which has displays about the town's huge summer festival, before transferring to your hotel in Hirosaki for your overnight stay.

Destination Information

Hakodate Morning Market – The Hakodate Morning Market is a local favourite for different types of fresh seafood, such as crabs, salmon eggs and sea urchin, as well as other fresh produce.

Goryokaku Tower – The 107-metre-tall Goryokaku Tower, opened in 2006, is a modern observation tower. From the observation deck, you can admire the star-shaped Fort Goryokaku below. The fort is a Western-style citadel, which was built in the last years of the Edo Period. In 1869, the fort was the site of one of the last battles between the Tokugawa Shogunate, whose forces were now in tatters, and the armies of the newly formed imperial government, which supported the Emperor Meiji and brought about the Meiji Restoration.

Aomori – Aomori City is the northernmost prefectural capital city on Honshu, Japan's main island, best known for its spectacular Nebuta Matsuri summer festival.

Nebuta Warasse Museum – This museum is dedicated to Aomori's famous 300-year-old Nebuta Matsuri, a lively annual summer festival and one of the biggest festivals in Japan. The museum tries to capture the spirit of the festival and give visitors a taste of its lively atmosphere, history and traditions. Please note that light in the museum is kept dim so that you can see how the enormous floats are lit up during the parade.

Day 6: Tsunagi Onsen Meals: B, L, D



Depart Hirosaki and travel around 3 and a half hours by coach to Kakunodate, an old samurai stronghold still known for its samurai traditions. Here, you will visit two samurai houses, including the Aoyagi Samurai Manor and Ishiguro House. You will be required to remove your shoes.

Continue a little over 1 hour to the hot spring resort of Tsunagi.

Tonight's accommodation is a ryokan, a traditional Japanese inn, where you will find tatami (straw mat) flooring and futon bedding to sleep on. There will be an onsen hot spring bath at the hotel for you to relax in and experience this traditional Japanese pastime. Please note that onsen baths are segregated by gender, and do not allow bathing suits.

Please note: You will need to pack a small overnight bag for the next <u>two</u> nights, as your main luggage will be transferred this morning directly to your hotel in Tokyo.

Destination Information

Aoyagi Samurai Manor Museum – This impressive restored family compound offers a glimpse into the Samurai way of life from the 17th - 20th centuries. Inside each structure is a fascinating exhibition of objects, including samurai swords and weapons, clothing, pictures and documents.

Ishiguro House – The Ishiguro Family Clan was the most prestigious Samurai clan in the Kakunodate region. The direct descendants have turned their home into a museum to showcase their samurai heritage, while still residing in the house.

Tsunagi – Tsunagi is a small town surrounded by beautiful mountains and has several onsen in the area.

Day 7: Cruise Matsushima Bay

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer 1 and a half hour to Hiraizumi, where you'll explore Chuson-ji Temple, with its beautiful old gold leaf-covered hall. Continue another 1 and a half hour to Matsushima to enjoy a relaxed cruise on Matsushima Bay, passing amongst the small pine tree-covered islands of this picturesque seascape. Transfer to Sendai and check in to your hotel for the night.



Destination Information

Chuson-ji Temple – Chuson-ji was established in 850 as a temple of the Tendai sect of Buddhism and expanded in the 12th century. At its peak, the temple consisted of dozens of buildings but after a fire in 1337 destroyed nearly everything, only two original buildings remain, alongside more recent reconstructions. Chuson-ji Temple was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011.

Matsushima Bay – Matsushima Bay is considered one of Japan's Three Great Sights, along with Miyajima and Amanohashidate. The bay is dotted by over 200 small islands covered by pine trees.

Day 8: Sendai to Nikko Meals: B, L, D



Walk 10-15 minutes to Sendai station. From here, take a 90-minute bullet train, then transfer 1 hour by coach to the small and charming city of Nikko. Here, drive by the scenic Shinkyo Bridge before visiting the lavish Toshogu Shrine, burial place of Ieyasu Tokugawa, who founded the Tokugawa Shogunate - a military dynasty that held power for more than 250 years, eclipsing the emperor in importance. At the shrine, there will be some steps to climb.

Continue to the magnificent Kegon Waterfall, taking a 100-metre elevator to a viewpoint where you can look up at the stunning waterfall. *You will be walking for approximately 2 hours in Nikko.*

Drive 2 and a half hours to Tokyo, Japan's iconic capital, and check in to your hotel.

Destination Information

Nikko – The Nikko area is best known for its vast and rich nature as well as famous sightseeing spots, including historic shrines and temples. Many people visit Nikko for its distinctive atmosphere, as it was the centre of Shinto and Buddhist mountain worship for many centuries. The town is also a popular hub for visitors to Nikko National Park, a verdant mountain landscape formed by historic volcanic activity.

Toshogu Shrine – Toshogu Shrine is the final resting place of the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a military dynasty who ruled Japan for over 250 years until the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s. The extravagantly-decorated shrine complex has more than a dozen buildings, set in a beautiful forest. Numerous wood carvings and large amounts of gold leaf were used to decorate the buildings in a way rarely seen in Japan, where simplicity was traditionally stressed in shrine architecture.

Kegon Waterfall – The 97-metre-tall Kegon Waterfall is Nikko's most famous waterfall, and has been ranked as one of Japan's three most beautiful waterfalls. Water from Lake Chuzenji, Japan's highest natural lake, falls straight down to the rocks below.

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. Although long the political and cultural centre of Japan, Tokyo became the official capital when the Meiji Emperor moved it from Kyoto in the late 1860s.

Day 9: Explore Tokyo Meals: B, L, D



A dazzling, high-tech metropolis, Japan's capital has wonderfully traditional roots. Begin the day with a leisurely stroll through the old district of Asakusa, where you can visit Senso-ji Temple and pick up some souvenirs on nearby Nakamise Shopping Street. Later, visit the Tokyo National Museum to see the many artefacts held there before lunch.

Head to the Shibuya district to visit Meiji Jingu shrine, dedicated to one of Japan's most beloved emperors. Located in a peaceful urban forest, it feels a world away from the bustling cityscape that surrounds it. Finally, head up to the observatory deck of the Tokyo Government Office Building for panoramic views of Tokyo and beyond.

You will be on your feet for 3-4 hours today.

Destination Information

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

Senso-ji Temple – Senso-ji Temple is an ancient Buddhist Temple and the oldest in Tokyo. The temple was originally founded in the 7th century. The temple adorns an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

Tokyo National Museum - Located in Ueno Park, the Tokyo National Museum is Japan's oldest museum. Here you'll find the world's largest collection of Japanese art, including ancient pottery, Buddhist sculptures, samurai swords, colourful woodblock prints, eloquent kimonos and much, much more.

Meiji Jingu Shrine – Meiji Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken. The shrine is located in an evergreen forest within the busy city and consists of 120,000 trees which were donated by people from all over Japan when the shrine was established. Meiji was the 122nd emperor of Japan, but the first in centuries to hold true power. The Meiji Restoration refers to the period in which power was taken back from the shogun and returned to the emperor. Under Meiji's rule, Japan underwent a period of rapid modernisation, and became involved in global politics after centuries of isolation.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building – The 243-metre-tall Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building has two towers, each housing an observatory at a height of 202 metres.

Day 10: Admire Mount Fuji Meals: B, L, D



Drive approximately 2 hours to the base of the famous Mount Fuji. Head up to Fuji's 5th Station for spectacular mountain vistas (weather permitting). If the 5th Station is closed as a result of local weather conditions, your guide may take you to the Fuji World Heritage Centre instead.

Later, enjoy a short cruise across the peaceful waters of Lake Ashi before boarding the Komagatake cable car to soar over the hilltops. If the ropeway is closed due to volcanic activity such as smoke, an alternative activity will be arranged.

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.

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 views of Mount Fuji in the distance.

Komagatake Ropeway – Komagatake Ropeway goes from the shore of Lake Ashi to a point near the Komagatake peak of Mount Hakone. When the weather and visibility is good, panoramic views of Lake Ashi and Mount Fuji can be enjoyed.

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



This morning, transfer to the train station to board your 2-hour bullet train to Kyoto. An enchanting city, Kyoto was capital for a thousand years; today, it is the legacy of ancient Japan, full of tranquil temples and sublime gardens.

This afternoon, visit Togetsukyo Bridge in the heart of the vibrant Arashiyama district and walk through the bamboo forest.

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

Destination Information

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years, from 794 until the late 1860s, when it was moved to Tokyo following the Meiji Restoration. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto and in nearby Nara, including old shrines and temples, screen paintings, beautiful gardens, and statues of Buddha.

Togetsukyo 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. Both cherry blossom season and autumn leaves season draw large crowds, as the scenery is beautiful. Famed for the bamboo grove, Arashiyama is a sightseeing district of Kyoto filled with temples and shrines.

Day 12: Explore Kyoto

Meals: B, L, D

Visit the beautiful Golden Pavilion, one of Kyoto's most iconic photo opportunities. Then, stroll through Nishiki Market, dubbed 'Kyoto's kitchen', where there are many interesting food and small shops to explore.



After lunch, stop by a sake brewery and learn about this traditional Japanese spirit.

The late afternoon is at leisure before meeting your group for dinner.

Destination Information

Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – This Zen Buddhist temple sits over a 'mirror pond' in a classical garden of the 'go round' style. The top two floors are covered in pure gold leaf. The temple is an excellent example of the Japanese design principle of 'shakkei', meaning borrowed scenery, which connects the building with its wider setting.

Nishiki Market – A narrow, five-block-long shopping street lined with dozens of shops and cafés, this lively retail market specialises in all things food-related, like fresh seafood, produce, and cookware. It is a popular place to find Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi. Street food packaging (but no other rubbish) can be returned to the stall from which it was purchased.

Day 13: Kyoto to Osaka Meals: B, L, D



Start the day by visiting Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its picturesque, open-air paths, framed by thousands of vermillion torii gates. The paths wind their way up Mount Inari. Please note that due to the limited parking space at Fushimi Inari Shrine, you may need to walk from the coach parking for 15 minutes before reaching the start of the torii gates.

Later, return to Kyoto and experience a Japanese tea ceremony, a deeply ritualised practice, the protocols of which evolved in Kyoto during the samurai period. Please note that you may be required to remove your shoes before entering the venue.

Continue to your lunch venue, where you will be hosted by a very special guest - a maiko, or apprentice geisha! Seeing a geisha is a matter of luck, even in Kyoto, so we invite you to enjoy this rare glimpse into their secretive world. Please be respectful and follow your guide's advice regarding courtesy. In particular, you should not photograph maiko or geisha until permission is given.

Finally, bid farewell to Kyoto and drive approximately 1 hour to the lively city of Osaka ahead of this evening's farewell dinner.

Please note: Today's advertised handkerchief dyeing experience has been upgraded to lunch with a maiko. This change has been made in order to enhance your itinerary.

Destination Information

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

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

Day 14-15: Depart Osaka Meals: B



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

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

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.

JOURNEY THROUGH JAPAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

A visa is not required for New Zealand passport holders for entry into Japan for stays up to 90 days.

Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN JAPAN:

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, most famous being Udon and Soba. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure.

Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Japan. Food is an important element of Japanese culture. It is a time for families and friends to come together and much of family life revolves around the dinner table. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get practicing as cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Breakfast will mostly be buffet-style but may be a set-menu. Lunches are mostly pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually buffet-style, featuring a wide selection of high quality Japanese and Western dishes, but may occasionally be a set-menu. We usually find this style of dining suits the wide and varied tastes of our customers on tour. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes.

All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as 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 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 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. If a visa is required, our Visa Department will be in touch with the paperwork and next steps. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: November 2026