

Off-Beat Japan

Go Beyond Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 3

TOKYO – FUJI FIVE LAKES – YUDANAKA –
NAGANO – TAKAYAMA – KYOTO – KOYASAN – HIMEJI – OSAKA

On this exhilarating tour, delve deeper into Japan's rich and fascinating past, present and future. Trek at the foot of Mount Fuji and stay at a traditional Buddhist lodge. You will also see the classic highlights of Japan.

- Learn the art of Taiko drumming
- Hike around the base of Mt Fuji
- Search for Snow Monkeys in the Japanese Alps
- Relax in a traditional Onsen
- Experience the speedy bullet train
- Chant with Buddhist Monks in Koyasan

TOUR MAP



OFF-BEAT JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive local 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.

GO BEYOND TOURS:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime. These tours include:

- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

PHYSICAL LEVEL 3:

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.

'Off-Beat Japan' is rated as a physical **level 3** tour. A good level of fitness is required as you need to be comfortable walking for 2-3 hours and covering longer distances. Walking or other activities will be at a gentle pace and will involve straightforward terrain.

- Sightseeing will often be for extended periods of time on foot and occasionally at an incline
- Trekking around the base of Mt Fuji will be for approximately 3 hours

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. If you require any more information about the pace of the tour, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights or 12 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 Tokyo and end the tour on Day 13 in Osaka. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

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 Edo Tokyo Museum is undergoing renovation. The visit will be replaced by a visit to Tokyo National Museum.

Day 1-2: Fly to Tokyo Meals : D



Fly to Tokyo, Japan's dynamic capital. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transferred approximately 90 minutes to your hotel. Depending on your arrival time, the rest of the day is yours to start soaking up the local atmosphere at your own pace before this evening's welcome dinner.

Please note: 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.

You will 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. Transfers will differ depending on group size.

Destination Information

Tokyo – One of the world's most cutting-edge capital cities, Tokyo is a city of contrasts, famous for its neon-lit streets, 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: Japanese Drumming Meals: B



Begin immersing yourself in Japanese culture by taking part in a traditional Japanese drumming (Taiko) class, where you will learn how to beat the 'wadaiko' with 'baichi'. Later, visit the Meiji Shrine and continue to the vibrant district of Harajuku before stopping by the famous Shibuya Crossing. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

Destination Information

Taiko – Taiko is a form of ancient Japanese percussion using large drums. Historically, it has had many uses, including military communication, theatrical accompaniment, religious ceremony and more. It has become a popular musical art form involving tightly choreographed movements.

Meiji Shrine – This Shinto shrine is dedicated to Emperor Meiji (reigned 1867-1912) and his wife, Empress Shoken. His rule is associated with the end of the Shogunate's military rule and the restoration of imperial power. It was under Meiji's rule that Japan transitioned from an isolationist state to a global world power. The shrine is located in an evergreen forest within the busy city.

Harajuku – A district near Shibuya, buzzing Harajuku is the centre of teenage fashion and cosplay culture.

Day 4: Discover Tokyo Meals: B



Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its high-tech frontage and you'll find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore.

Begin your day at the Tokyo Skytree, where you'll ascend to the first observatory of the Tokyo Skytree for panoramic views across the city. Next, head to the old district of Asakusa and soak up the atmosphere at Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest and most famous temple, before browsing the stalls on Nakamise Shopping Street. Later, stroll through the Imperial Palace East Garden.

This afternoon, explore the Tokyo National Museum before some time at leisure.

You will spend 3-4 hours on foot today.

Due to the limited coach parking, you may need to walk for approximately 15 minutes on flat road from the coach to reach some of the areas visited.

Please note, on some May and September departures, there is an extra special addition to today's itinerary: 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

Imperial Palace East Garden – The Imperial Palace East Gardens are part of the inner palace area. They are the former site of Edo Castle's innermost circles of defense. The palace itself cannot be entered.

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

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

Day 5: Mount Fuji Meals: B,D



This morning, drive approximately 2.5-3 hours to reach Mt Fuji (traffic depending). Take a relaxed three-hour walk around the base of this iconic mountain, enjoying the forest scenery. Afterwards, transfer to your hotel and check in for your overnight stay.

In the Fuji region, we use a selection of hotels, some of which are in the more traditional ryokan style. The rooms in these hotels typically feature Japanese elements. You may sleep on a futon with the mattress lying directly on a tatami mat floor and experience the Japanese culture.

*For **May** departures only: A visit to the Fuji Shibazakura Festival will be included. This is the best time of the year and one of the most scenic places in Japan to see the pink moss phlox in full bloom. Please note, the flowers' bloom is weather dependent.*

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.

Day 6: **Snow Monkeys** Meals: B



Drive approximately 3.5 hours to Matsumoto, where you will explore the formidable 16th century Matsumoto Castle, nicknamed 'Crow Castle' for its intense black exterior.

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 (approximately 30-40 minutes each way) to reach the monkey pool, and watch them bathe and play in the warm waters. Accustomed to humans, the monkeys can be observed up close, and they almost completely ignore their human guests. Please keep in mind that the snow monkeys are wild, not domestic animals and sighting them is never guaranteed, particularly during the breeding season which runs from late September through to November.

Continue to Nagano and check in at your hotel for a one-night stay.

Please note - Matsumoto Castle: 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.

Please note - Snow Monkey visit: 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

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.

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.

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.

Day 7: Japanese Alps

Meals: B, D



This morning, travel 2 hours to Hotaka to ride the Shin-Hotaka Ropeway into the Japanese Alps. Arrive at the observation platform at 2,156 metres above sea level and enjoy stunning views of the surrounding mountains.

Drive approximately 90 minutes further to Takayama, where you will have some free time to explore Kamisannomachi Street with its many high-quality souvenir shops. You may like to sample the street food available here (at personal expense). Food sticks can be returned to the stall, as there are few bins in Takayama; please do not take food into the shops.

This evening, enjoy dinner in your ryokan.

Please note the Shin-Hotaka ropeway may be closed due to strong winds. If this is the case, you will continue directly to Takayama.

Overnight accommodation: Stay overnight in a ryokan with onsen facilities. Here, you will find a futon bed placed on top of a tatami mat. Please do not wear your shoes on the tatami mat or in the bathroom. Shoes will be provided for use in your room. Bathroom slippers are usually separate from the tatami mat slippers and we ask guests to respect this aspect of Japanese culture.

Destination Information

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. This laid-back mountain town is the western gateway to the Japanese Alps.

Day 8: Bullet train to Kyoto — Meals: B



Today, take the bullet train to Kyoto. The journey includes two trains; first the Limited express to Nagoya, which takes around 2 hours and 20 minutes, before changing to the Shinkansen bullet train for a 40-minute journey to Kyoto.

On arrival, drive to 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.

Later, visit Kiyomizu-dera Temple before a stroll around the old neighbourhoods of Higashiyama and the historic geisha district of Gion. Please note that spotting a geisha is quite rare; if you are lucky enough to see one, please behave respectfully. It is against local Kyoto laws to photograph a geisha without her permission.

Please note: Due to luggage restrictions on the train, your luggage (max one suitcase per person) will be transferred separately and will arrive in Kyoto the following day. Therefore you will need to pack a separate overnight bag for your first night in Kyoto.

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.

Fushimi Inari Taisha – Famous for its brilliant red traditional torii gates, Fushimi Inari stretches from the bottom to the top of Mount Inari. It is the head shrine for 40,000 Inari shrines throughout the country. It 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.

Kiyomizu Temple – Meaning 'Pure Water Temple', Kiyomizu is one of the most celebrated temples of Japan and houses the Jishu Shrine, dedicated to the deity of love. The temple is famous for its wooden balcony, jutting out 13 metres above the hillside. The numerous cherry and maple trees below offer a beautiful sea of colours in spring and autumn.

Day 9: **Kyoto** Meals: B



Visit Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, where you will have some time to admire the forest's towering thickets and see Togetsukuo Bridge before enjoying a rickshaw ride.

Later, visit Ryoan-ji, the 'temple of the peaceful dragon'. Continue to the famous Kinkaku-ji, also known as the 'Golden Pavilion'; the top two levels are covered in pure gold leaf

Destination Information

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.

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.

Arashiyama – Famed for its small but towering bamboo grove, Arashiyama is a district of Kyoto filled with temples and shrines.

Day 10: Kimonos & Koyasan Meals: B, D



This morning, witness the rituals involved in the preparation and pouring of tea in a traditional tea ceremony. Due to the nature of this cultural experience, you may be required to remove your shoes before entering the venue.

Later, try your hand at the traditional art of origami, and enjoy the opportunity to wear a kimono! The kimono is a wrapped-front garment, worn with the left side wrapped over the right and usually finished with a waist sash called an obi. There are different types of kimonos for men and women.

This afternoon, travel by road to Koyasan for your overnight stay in a 13th-century temple - a true glimpse into the life of a Shingon Buddhist monk. The journey is approximately 3 hours.

The temple where you will lodge tonight is staffed by monks who generally do not speak English. Accommodation is traditional and basic; single mattresses known as futons will be laid on traditional tatami mats. Tatami mat floors are not hard and mattresses are designed for comfortable sleep. The doors to rooms are made from rice paper, so noise will travel, and they cannot be locked. Rooms are individually heated, but hallways are not. There will be shared bathrooms with shower and toilet facilities. Please note that the showers are open-plan with no screens. In the morning there is no hot water for showering or use of the public bath.

The evening meal is a Buddhist vegetarian dinner, known as Shojin Ryori and is served promptly at 18:00. The evening is free for quiet reflection in your room; please note there are no TVs on the premises.

Destination Information

Koyasan – Known primarily as the centre of the Shingon sub-section of Buddhism, Koya-san sits in the mountains and is the ideal spot to get a glimpse of Japan's traditional religious life

Day 11: Morning Prayers Meals: B



Rise early this morning to join the monks in their daily morning prayers before a traditional breakfast. Take an hour's walking tour of Koyasan before visiting Kongobu-ji Temple.

Afterwards, travel by coach to visit the atmospheric Okunoin Cemetery, with its many stone memorials and lanterns, towered over by ancient cedars. Look out for the small Jizo stone statues, believed to be the guardians of children and travellers, adorned with red bibs and hats.

Stop at the bright lights of the Dotonbori district, where you will enjoy some free time before taking the coach back to the hotel.

Sightseeing today will be approximately four hours on flat but rough terrain.

This afternoon, drive 2.5 hours to Osaka. Check in at your hotel in Osaka, your home for the next two nights.

Destination Information

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

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

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.

Dotonbori District – Historically a theatre district and still a popular entertainment area, Osaka's Dotonbori district offers an eccentric and electric atmosphere. Expect neon lights, busy street food stalls and a cornucopia of interesting sights, sounds and smells.

Day 12: Himeji Castle & Sake Brewery Meals: B, D



Today, drive approximately two hours west to Himeji. Visit the magnificent Himeji Castle, one of Japan's most impressive feudal-era forts.

Continue on to a sake brewery to learn about the brewing process and enjoy some tasters. Later, travel back to Osaka.

This evening, enjoy a farewell dinner.

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 issue numbered tickets to visitors in order to limit the number of people who can enter the Main Keep, reducing congestion, waiting time, and to protect the cultural properties. Please note that this means that there may be rare cases where some visitors are not allowed to enter the Main Keep.

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 – 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.

Sake Brewery – Sake is the national alcohol of Japan; a tour of the brewery offers the chance to learn about the manufacturing processes from the 1950s to the present day.

Day 13-14: Depart Osaka Meals: B



This morning is free at leisure before transferring to the 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 Off-Beat 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 additional pricing 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.

OFF- BEAT 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:

For Go Beyond tours most meals are included (excluding drinks), please see your day-to-day itinerary for details on which meals are included.

On all Group tours, Extensions and Pre & Post Stays, no refund will be given for any meals missed due to your flight timings, or personal choice.

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, the most famous being Udon and Soba. 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 – Western cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

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

All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in New Zealand.

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

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 to your hotel either by:

- Direct shared bus (shared with other passengers, not just Wendy Wu Tours clients)
- Shared bus plus taxi from the nearest bus stop to the hotel (maximum 5-minute walk)
- Chartered coach (if there are more than 8 Wendy Wu Tours passengers arriving at the same time)

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 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

TIPPING POLICY:

Although tipping in Japan is not customary, if you feel you have received an excellent service, please feel free to tip your guide at your discretion.

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:

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