



ESSENTIAL

Must-see Japan

10 Nights

Tokyo > Hakone > Kyoto > Hiroshima > Osaka > Tokyo



Take an evening walking tour of Kyoto's Gion geisha district



Enjoy iconic *okonomiyaki* pancakes in Hiroshima



Take a boat ride across Lake Ashi in the shadow of Mount Fuji



Hike to the Daibutsu 'Great Buddha' in Kamakura



Visit Miyajima island and encounter the local wild deer



Experience Tokyo old and new with visits to Senso-ji temple and the Harajuku fashion district

IJT ESSENTIAL TOURS

Flexible, fast-paced tours. Just the basics included, keeping the cost down so you can choose how much you spend

Style Facts

- Two - three-star accommodation
- En suite rooms in Western-style hotels, shared single-sex bathroom facilities in Japanese style inns
- Airport arrival and departure transfers by shared shuttle bus
- Breakfast every day plus one or two evening meals
- Entrance fees not included
- Carry your own luggage
- Solo travellers: a single room is available for no extra charge at Western-style hotels, but you will need to share with a member of the same sex in the Japanese-style inns

Tour Overview

An essential-level, whistle-stop tour that includes five of Japan's must-see destinations, offering a mix of old and new, vibrant city life and quieter rural stops, flexibility to do your own thing, and lots of bang for your buck.

Must-see Japan focuses on hitting Japan's highlights. You'll visit Tokyo, Hakone, Kyoto, Hiroshima (including Miyajima), Osaka, and Kamakura (optional daytrip), with plenty of time to break off and pursue your own wish list, too.

Being on a guided route led by one of our Insiders means you don't have to worry about missing out on the best bits. We'll take you to top local spots, share first-hand stories of life in Japan, and give you the chance to ask as many questions as you'd like.

It's a fast-paced tour, blending the vibrant big city life of Tokyo and Osaka with 20th century history in Hiroshima, rural Japan in Hakone, and ancient history and culture in Kyoto.

But though we'll move fast, we've kept inclusions on this tour light so you can do your own thing without worrying about wasting experiences you've paid for. You'll have lots of opportunities to apply your own handbrake and branch out on your own.

With plenty of time in Tokyo, you might take the family to Disneyland, explore the quirky fashion district of Harajuku, or ask your Insider to show you the city's best *yokocho*, tiny alleyways packed with food and drinks galore.

Whether you're travelling solo (bonus: no single supplement on this tour!) or with friends or family, Must-see Japan is designed to help you blend hitting the big-ticket items with seeing the sights that are most important to you.



Day by day

Many of our customers choose to arrive a day or two early to get over jet-lag and get the most out of the tour. Whatever the case, we will be happy to make arrangements to suit your needs

Day 1-3 Tokyo

Welcome to Japan! For your first night, you'll have a welcome dinner (included) at an *izakaya* tapas-style restaurant where you can get to know your Insider and meet the others in your group.

We'll take an extensive walking tour of Tokyo both by public transport and on foot. You'll get to see Tokyo's oldest temple, Senso-ji, and soak up the traditional atmosphere in the surrounding Asakusa district; visit Tokyo's most famous Shinto shrine, Meiji shrine, in a tranquil forested area in the center of the city; and explore alternative fashion and youth subcultures in the famous Harajuku area.

On day three, choose to stay in Tokyo and set out to explore on your own, or join your Insider for a day trip to Kamakura, a popular seaside town. Here, you'll get to visit the Daibutsu 'great Buddha' sitting majestically outdoors, and Hase-dera temple with its mysterious grotto and immense wooden sculpture. Enjoy an afternoon hike through the forest, hopping between lesser-known temples and shrines.

Overnight: The B Ikebukuro

Day 4 Hakone

Leaving the skyscraper forest behind, on day four you'll travel out of the city to nearby Hakone – a beautiful national park and home to the iconic Mount Fuji.

Here, you'll take a variety of transport styles to work your way across the landscape – from switchback and funicular railways to a cable car, and even a pirate boat across the beautiful Lake Ashi.

Sample the 'black eggs' that Hakone is famous for – boiled in the water of the bubbling, sulfurous landscape, nicknamed 'Hell Valley' – and spend a night at a traditional Japanese inn, sleeping on futon mattresses and enjoying indoor and outdoor hot spring bathing. Hot spring bathing is an integral and very enjoyable part of Japanese culture, so make sure you take advantage of these!

Overnight: Fuji Hakone Guest House

Day 5-6 Kyoto

On day five, you'll rocket across the main island of Honshu with an extended ride on the bullet train to Kyoto – with a chance to see Mount Fuji from the window if the weather behaves.

You'll spend two nights in Japan's ancient capital, which, being home to over 1500 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, is the jewel in the country's cultural crown.

Soak up the city's rich history and culture as a local guide takes you on a tour through the geisha district of Gion, with its meandering back streets, temples, and shrines, and learn about the fascinating history of geisha in Kyoto.

On day six, you'll have a full day to explore the less crowded parts of Kyoto. We avoid setting an itinerary in stone, giving our Insiders the freedom to design one that considers the season, the weather, and their own personal top spots.

Feel free to break off from the group if you'd like to do your own thing (your Insider can help with logistics.)

If you've had your fill of temples and shrines, you could take a lesson in indigo dyeing, visit the Toei Eiga Mura Kyoto Studio theme park, or check out the Kyoto Manga Museum.

Overnight: Mitsui Garden Kyoto Shijo

Day 7 Hiroshima

After another ride on the world famous *shinkansen* bullet train, you'll arrive in Hiroshima – a modern city with a difficult past.

First, you'll switch to a local train for the short journey to the port, before hopping on a ferry over

to Miyajima island with its immense floating torii gate. Explore UNSECO world-heritage designated Itsukushima Shrine, Daisho-in temple tucked away in the forest, and spot wild deer roaming freely around the island.

Returning to Hiroshima later in the day for an included dinner, you'll chow down on the local speciality: *okonomiyaki* – a savoury pancake made from noodles and vegetables, fried on a hot plate right in front of you.

Overnight: Hiroshima Washington Hotel

Day 8 Osaka

Spend the morning at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum to learn about the events of 6 August 1945, a moving and fundamental part of the city's history.

Then board the bullet train once more to head to Osaka – Japan's capital of cool, with a distinctly less traditional feel than its neighbouring cities. The first place to explore is the lively downtown district: checking out the famous neon lights and Glico 'running man' landmark, visiting the Doguyasuji cookware street, or the hip America-Mura shopping district.

Get a taste of what Osaka's all about with an optional street food tour experience – and learn what it means to experience the city's philosophy of 'eat until you drop'.

From *takoyaki* octopus balls to *kushikatsu* deep-fried skewers, tiny bars tucked away in back streets and above shops, to giant animatronic crabs flashing above crowded, smoking grills, your Insider will show you exactly how street food is where Osaka shines.

Overnight: Cross Hotel Osaka

Day 9-11 Tokyo

Spend a free morning in Osaka with options galore depending on your interests. For samurai history, visit Osaka castle; for panoramic views, the observation deck at the Umeda Sky building combines perfectly with a visit to the quirky Kinutani Koji Tenku Art museum; or to continue filling your belly, dive into Kuromon market's seafood specialities.

For families, you could even visit Universal Studios Japan before heading on to Tokyo later in the day (your Insider will help sort logistics with rejoining the group).

In the afternoon, board your final bullet train back to Tokyo. You'll stay in the upmarket Ginza area, packed with boutique shops and restaurants, and with the former Tskukiji wholesale fish market just around the corner, you'll be in a great spot to do as the locals do and indulge in super fresh sushi for breakfast.

Spend your final free day in Tokyo wrapping up any last bits to explore – let your Insider know what you'd like to do, and they'll help you plan it all out. We suggest heading to the SkyTree for incredible views across the city, checking out the Miraikan Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, heading to Nakano Broadway or Akihabara if you want to take a deep dive into manga and anime 'geek culture', visiting the bustling Shinjuku district to glimpse the busiest train station in the world,

or opting for the quieter Yanaka area for a taste of local Tokyo life.

After a final day of fun in Tokyo, join your Insider and the group for an optional farewell dinner to say your goodbyes, swap stories, and reflect on everything you've packed in.

Overnight: Hotel Vista Tsukiji

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. You will be provided on the ground with Day-by-Day sheets and the tour leader will outline what they are going to do each day in detail. If you would like to break away from the group and do something different, they will be available to offer advice, and help you plan your day.

What's included

- ✔ Full-time services of your InsideJapan Insider tour leader
- ✔ 10 nights' accommodation
- ✔ Breakfast every day and two evening meals
- ✔ Your InsideJapan Info-Pack
- ✔ All transport between destinations; Transport passes in Hakone and an IC transport card with 2,500 yen credit for city transport
- ✔ Cable car and boat ride across Lake Ashi in Hakone
- ✔ Evening walking tour of Kyoto's Gion geisha district
- ✔ Visit to Hiroshima's Peace Park Museum
- ✔ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout trip
- ✔ Luggage forwarding from Tokyo to Kyoto and from Hiroshima to Tokyo
- ✔ Arrival and departure transfers by shared shuttle bus

NOT Included

- ✘ International flights
- ✘ Any local transport (subways, taxis, buses) unless covered by the included transport passes
- ✘ Any entrances fees (including those for museums, temples & shrines) unless otherwise specified
- ✘ Baggage handling and luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified - you will be expected to carry your own luggage

Sample Accommodation

Please note that accommodation is subject to change. Final details of the accommodation will be included in your Info-Pack, which will be sent out approximately four weeks before departure. If you'd like to know more, please speak to your travel consultant.

The B Ikebukuro, Tokyo

The B Hotel in Ikebukuro combines modern and stylish décor in this well-located hotel providing for a comfortable stay in one of Tokyo's most exciting districts. The rooms are western style and have en suite bathrooms and there is a very good Pizza restaurant on the second floor. The hotel has free WiFi throughout.

Fuji Hakone Guesthouse, Hakone

The Fuji-Hakone Guest House is a simple Japanese-style, family-run accommodation with friendly, English-speaking staff. Free Wi-Fi is available.

Established in 1984, the guesthouse is an excellent budget accommodation located in Hakone - the perfect base for your exploration of the beautiful national park area surrounding Mount Fuji. Rooms are simple but comfortable, and designed in traditional Japanese style, with *shoji* paper screens and *futon* mattresses laid out on *tatami*-mat floors. They do not have attached bathroom facilities or toilets.

The guesthouse's prime feature is its indoor and outdoor *onsen* baths, fed by natural volcanic hot spring water. Bathing facilities at the guesthouse are shared, (as is the norm in Japanese-style inns), but you can book the baths for private use.

Mitsui Garden Kyoto Shijio, Kyoto

The Mitsui Garden Hotel is a mid-range hotel located on one of Kyoto's main avenues, Shijo-dori, right in the heart of Kyoto's downtown shopping and dining district. Centrally located, it has great connections with both the local subway and bus networks, making it a great base for sightseeing. The Yuzen Gallery of silk dyeing and Mibu Temple are both just a few minutes' walk away and all of Kyoto's sights are easily reached from here. The hotel features modern and comfortable fully en-suite rooms. You can also use the on-site traditional Japanese-style bath house if you wish. A Japanese/Western mixed buffet breakfast is served in the hotel's restaurant, Kozue.

Hiroshima Washington, Hiroshima

Located in the downtown Hatchobori area, the Hiroshima Washington Hotel is an excellent base for your stay in the city. The guestrooms are comfortable if a little cozy, and come with standard amenities and free Wi-Fi internet. The hotel's central location means there are plenty of restaurants and bars in the vicinity for dinner, including the famous Okonomiyaki-mura just around the corner where you can try out the local speciality: savoury okonomiyaki pancakes.

Cross Hotel Osaka Osaka

The Cross is a smart hotel on Dotonbori, one of the liveliest and most famous streets in Japan.

The hotel has recently been refurbished and boasts sleek, modern design both inside and out, giving it something of a boutique feel. Rooms are

stylishly decorated and surprisingly generously sized for a city-centre hotel, and each bathroom offers a deep soaking tub, separate shower and a small "powder room".

The Cross has its own restaurant and bar, but its great location also means that there are a plethora of establishments to choose from on your doorstep, making this the perfect place to indulge in one of Osaka's main attractions: fabulous food and drink! A great many of Osaka's attractions are within easy walking distance of the hotel, but if you need to travel further afield, Nanba subway station is only three minutes' walk away, and Shinsaibashi is just five minutes away.

Despite its lively location, the hotel itself is a quiet and peaceful place, so should you be looking for an early night you will not be disturbed.

Hotel Vista Tokyo Tsukiji, Tokyo

The Hotel Vista Tokyo Tsukiji is a contemporary accommodation perfectly positioned near the famous Tsukiji Outer Market and the upscale Ginza shopping and dining district, one of Tokyo's most iconic neighborhoods, making it an ideal base for exploring the city.

The hotel is just a short walk from both the Higashi-Ginza and Tsukiji-Shijo subway stations, providing convenient connections to the rest of Tokyo. Guest rooms are compact and designed for comfort and convenience, featuring amenities such as free Wi-Fi, a flat-screen TV, an air purifier and en suite bathroom.

Guests can enjoy a breakfast buffet at the hotel's Vista Café, located on the second floor. The café serves a mix of Japanese and Western dishes, including fresh seafood from the nearby Tsukiji market, homemade tofu, and other local specialties. The open lounge, furnished with elegant Karimoku furniture, provides a relaxing bright space to start the day.

For added convenience, the hotel provides facilities such as a vending machine area with soft drinks and alcoholic beverages, a laundromat, an ice machine, and a microwave.

Important Tour Information

Fitness

Even when not using public transport, sightseeing in Japan often involves walking between sights, climbing up steps in temples and being 'on the go' for much of the day. To enjoy any of our Small Group Tours you should be of moderate fitness, able to walk and climb stairs without difficulty and able to maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

Dietary Requirements

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know in advance if you have any special dietary requirements and we will try to ensure that included meals meet these needs.

In addition, please note that dietary requirements (such as vegetarianism, gluten-free diets and even some allergies) are very uncommon in Japan so meals for those with specific requirements may be simpler and less varied.

En suite / shared facilities

Culturally, communal bathing is common practice in Japan. Please note that in some traditional accommodations fully private en suite facilities may not be available. Shared facilities (when included) will always be separated by gender.

Policy on single rooms

There is no single supplement for this tour. Single travellers will have a single room free of charge at all of the western style hotels (9 nights). They will be asked to share with another single traveller of the same sex at the Japanese style stay (maximum one night).

Double rooms

Please note that in Japan, twin rooms are very much the norm, and there are far fewer double rooms available. Please understand that on this tour we are not able to offer double rooms at any of the locations.

Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English speaker, now a resident of Japan and able to speak Japanese. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels and *ryokan*, so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time.

Your tour leader is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace, yet they are available pretty much all day every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion!

Please note that the tour leader reserves the right to deny participation in an activity if they feel that it is in the safety or best interest of you and/or any other members of the group. Similarly, dangerous weather conditions may lead to cancellation of such an activity.

Luggage

We highly recommend that to make your stay more enjoyable you pack reasonably light. Large suitcases will be an inconvenience to you as you will have to carry your bags for short distances at times and some stations do not have escalators or elevators/lifts.

For ease of transit, we will be forwarding your luggage on two occasions and you will be without your main baggage for 1 night in Hakone and 1 night in Osaka.

You will need a small overnight bag (e.g. backpack) for use when we forward our main bags to the next location.

Transport on tour

Please note that most transfers are by public transport making use of Japan's first-rate transport network. This tour uses a mixture of trains, taxis, public buses and boats.

International Flights

This tour starts and finishes in Tokyo for arrivals and departures at Tokyo Narita Airport or Tokyo Haneda Airport. Please note that the included meet-and-greet and airport transfer to the first hotel is ONLY available from these two airports.

Check-in

Upon arrival you will probably be tired after a long international flight. Please note that rooms at the Tokyo hotel are only available **from 3pm**.

Hotels in Japan operate strict check-in policies. If you have an early arrival you can either book an extra night for any-time check-in, or the hotel will be happy to securely store your luggage for you whilst you go for a drink or explore the local area.

