



A Town & Country Tour of Japan

April 1 ~ April 13, 2019

Escorted By JOHN O'REGAN, CTC



April 1: Arrive Japan

Welcome to Japan. Upon arrival at Narita New Tokyo Airport, you will be met in the arrivals hall and transferred to our airport hotel. For logistical reasons we are having the group assemble here at an airport hotel close to Tokyo Narita airport before the 2 hour drive into Tokyo the following day. It will provide a convenient place to rest after the Journey across the pond and allow you to choose the airline and schedule that fits your needs.

Hotel: NIKKO NARITA

April 2: Narita / Tokyo

Following a leisurely breakfast, assemble in the hotel lobby at 10:30am for our transfer into Tokyo. We have planned a very easy first day for you with leisure time to get oriented to Tokyo. This evening please plan on joining John for a visit to the Tokyo Tower and our Welcome to Japan Dinner.

Hotel: THE HYATT REGENCY TOKYO

Meals (Breakfast/Dinner)

April 3: Tokyo Sightseeing

Embark on a city tour of Tokyo. Visit the Imperial Palace, formally known as Edo Castle, surrounded by its original innermost moat and star attraction, the Meiji Shrine, located in a forest that covers an area of 700,000 square meters. During lunch, enjoy a cooking class where you will learn how to make sushi, a Local Specialty, in the famous Ginza district. Continue to Sensoji, the Asakusa Kannon Buddhist temple. It is one of Tokyo's most colorful and popular temples. The temple was completed in 645, making it Tokyo's oldest temple. Visit Nakamise, a shopping street over 200 meters long that stretches from the outer gate to the temple's second interior gate. Alongside typical Japanese souvenirs such as yukata and folding fans, various traditional local snacks from the area are sold. This evening is at your leisure.

Hotel: THE HYATT REGENCY TOKYO



Meals (Breakfast/Lunch)

April 4: Mt. Fuji and Hakone Sightseeing

After breakfast we depart by train to Mt. Fuji. Upon arrival, we proceed to the Five Lakes District dominated by majestic Mt. Fuji. At 3776m, it is Japan's highest mountain and most recognizable icon. Ascend to the 5th Station of Mount Fuji to enjoy some spectacular views at 2,300m (weather permitting). After enjoying lunch at a local restaurant continue to the Owakudani Valley where you will see volcanic activity and enjoy black eggs boiled in the geysers. Continue on to the beautiful town of Hakone, where the cherry blossoms are noted sights in this area; in the spring this is known as Sakura and in autumn the Susuki. Take a cable car ride over the crystal-clear blue waters of Lake Ashi, where you'll see the rising volcanic fumes of Owakudani and enjoy the spectacular grandeur of Mount Fuji (weather permitting). Later enjoy a boat ride on Lake Ashi.

Hotel: YAMANO

Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner)

April 5: Tokyo / Matsumoto / Takayama

Drive north this morning to visit Matsumoto Castle one of the most complete and beautiful of Japan's original castles, with its unique timber and stone structure. Visit the Matsumoto city museum. Later, head to the Matsumoto, famous for its wasabi cultivation you will learn about the production of wasabi before enjoying a lunch of soba noodles with wasabi. Continue your journey through the breath-taking Japanese Alps to the beautiful hill town of Takayama. A city in the mountainous Hida region of the Gifu prefecture, it has retained a traditional touch like few other Japanese cities, especially in its beautifully preserved old town with Edo-style streets. Takayama gained importance as a source of high quality timber and highly skilled carpenters during the feudal ages.

Tonight you are in for a special treat. Staying at a typical ryokan is a traditional Japanese cultural experience not to be missed, and it is not like staying at a Western-style hotel. Ryokans have been a part of Japanese culture for centuries. Some of the earliest ryokans were (and some still are) located on the Tokaido Highway which connected the capital city of Edo (current day Tokyo) and the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. A typical ryokan guest room contains the "agari-kamachi" (after opening the door guests step into this small area and take off their shoes), "shoji" (sliding paper doors), "tatami" mat flooring (reed floor matting), low wooden tables, "zabuton" (sitting cushions), futon (sleeping quilts), and an "engawa" (a glass enclosed sitting area separated from the room by a shoji).

Hotel: HIDEI HANA OGI RYOKAN

Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner)

April 6: Takayama Sightseeing

Begin your walking tour of Takayama, known as 'Little Kyoto', filled with amazing attractions. Explore the Old Town, stopping at some of the traditional houses and delightful local museums and wander through a vibrant Asaichi open-air flower and fruit market. Later enjoy a Highlight Lunch of Japanese Hida beef at a local restaurant. Hida-gyu (Hida Beef) is the specific name given to beef from a black-haired Japanese cattle breed, it is known as one of the finest quality varieties of beef. After lunch, continue to TakayamaJinya. TakayamaJinya was a former government outpost that was established in order to bring the Hida Province under the direct control of the Edo Bakufu (Shogunate) in 1629. Continue to the Kami-Sannomachisu District where you will find skillfully renowned local artisans. Take time to sample Sake, a delicious rice wine. Walk through the narrow streets and admire the ancient Japanese wooden architecture. This evening is free for you to explore the many restaurants in this picturesque town.

Hotel: HIDEI HANA OGI RYOKAN

Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner)

April 7: Takayama / Shirakawago / Kanazawa

Take a step back in time with a Local Expert during a visit to the peaceful mountain village and UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawago. Here you'll find the Gasshozukuri houses built of wooden beams combined to form a steep thatched roof that resembles two hands together. Later continue towards the coast to Kanazawa, a historic castle town which boasts beautifully preserved Samurai districts. On arrival, take time to see the Nagamachi District with old Samurai houses. Stop to visit the Normura house, an elegant Samurai mansion with beautiful small gardens belonging to a high-ranked Samurai family. Later check in to your centrally located hotel and enjoy a relaxing evening.

Hotel: ANA CROWN PLAZA KANAZAWA



Meals (Breakfast/Lunch)

April 8: Kanazawa / Kyoto

Begin the day with a short walk through the Omicho market to see the local fish catch and enjoy an insider's view of everyday life in a busy coastal town. Continue to the gardens of Kenrokuen, rated as one of the top 3 most beautiful landscaped gardens in Japan and enjoy a Japanese tea ceremony. Kanazawa produces 99% of Japan's high-quality gold leaf. Discover the secrets of gold leaf painting during a visit with a local artist before traveling to Kyoto by train. Kyoto is home to some of Japan's most important works of art, its richest culture and most refined cuisine. On arrival at your centrally located hotel, you are free to explore this historic town for the rest of the day. Tonight we will enjoy our exclusive private traditional Japanese Kaiseki Highlight Dinner with Geisha music and dance performance.

Hotel: THE KYOTO HOTEL OKURA

Meals (Breakfast/Dinner)

April 9: Kyoto Sightseeing

Explore Kyoto today. This delightful city has an abundance of fine architecture in its shrines and temples, gardens, and variety of art and craft shops. See Nijo Castle, the old Shogun residence, the Kinkakuji Temple famous for its Golden Pavilion. This afternoon, enjoy a special Be My Guest lunch at a traditional Ryokan nestled in the peace and quiet of Mt. Yoshida. Enjoy the pleasures of a truly flavorful and unique dining experience of kaiseki cuisine, crafted from the very freshest of seasonal delicacies. Later continue on to Heian Shinto Shrine with its beautiful inner garden and Nishikikoji market to purchase last minute souvenirs with hundreds of local shops to explore. The evening is free to enjoy Kyoto as you wish. Relax at the hotel, explore the town or join an optional trip to the Gion Corner for a cultural performance. This local theater's programs introduce visitors to Japanese customs like traditional arts, tea ceremonies, flower arrangement, Bunraku puppet plays, Kyomai dance, music and gagaku (court music).

Hotel: THE KYOTO HOTEL OKURA



Meals (Breakfast/Lunch)

April 10: Kyoto / Nara / Kyoto

Proceed this morning to Nara city for sightseeing, visiting the Todaiji Temple with the Great Buddha. Todaiji is one of Japan's most famous and historically significant temples, constructed in AD 752; the massive building houses one of Japan's largest bronze statues of Buddha. The 15 meters tall, seated Buddha represents Vairocana and is flanked by two Bodhisattvas. Continue on to the Kasuga Taisha Shrine, among the most celebrated in Japan. It was established at the same time as the capital and is dedicated to the deity responsible for the protection of the city.

Later this afternoon return to Kyoto and visit Kiyomizu Temple. Located halfway up Otowa Mountain in the eastern part of Kyoto City, Kiyomizu-dera is an historic temple that was established in 778, even before Kyoto became the capital of Japan. Before returning to your hotel, visit the Sanjudo Sangendo Temple. Sanjudo Sangendo is the popular name for Rengeo-in, a temple in eastern Kyoto which is famous for its 1001 statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. In the evening, enjoy a walking tour of Gion District. Later enjoy dinner at an Indian restaurant.

Hotel: THE KYOTO HOTEL OKURA**Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner)****April 11: Kyoto / Osaka**

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast this morning and free time before our late morning hotel check-out. We will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before heading to Osaka. On arrival we will proceed to our hotel and have the balance of the day and evening at leisure.

Hotel: THE WESTIN HOTEL OSAKA**Meals (Breakfast/Lunch)****April 12: Osaka sightseeing**

Set out on a half day sightseeing tour of Osaka, the third largest city in Japan with a population of over 17 million people in its greater metropolitan area. Visit the Osaka Castle, one of Japan's most famous castles which played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century. The Castle grounds, which cover approximately 15 acres, contain thirteen structures which have been designated as Important Cultural Assets by the Japanese government. Afternoon at leisure. This evening please plan on joining John for our Farewell Dinner.

Hotel: THE WESTIN HOTEL OSAKA**Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner)****April 13: Osaka / Home**

Today is at leisure until your transfer from the hotel to the airport. John will advise you of the exact transfer time the day prior to your departure.

Meals (Breakfast)**Trip Cost:****\$ 8590.00 per person double occupancy****Tour Reservations:** Require a non-refundable deposit of \$2,000.00 per person. Non-refundable Final payment due is due 90 days prior to departure.**Includes:**

All Twin room accommodation inclusive of tax and service charge as applicable.

27 Meals are included (11 breakfasts, 9 lunches and 7 dinners).

Transfers inclusive of baggage handling and portage.

Transport services by private air-conditioned Coach & Tourist class reserved seating on all train segments.

Sushi Cooking Class.

Not Included:

Any meals not listed, items of a personal nature such as telephone calls, laundry, beverages, gratuities to guides/drivers (which are discretionary in nature) and international airfare to Tokyo-Narita returning from Osaka