



The Very Best of Japan

20 days from only £5,495 per person

From the kimono-clad geisha who grace Kyoto's streets, to Tokyo's modern neon-lit metropolis, what makes Japan so unique is its ability to hold on to age-old customs and timeless traditions, yet entwine them seamlessly into modern day living.

With stunning landscapes and delicious regional cuisines, a plethora of historic shrines and temples and an intriguing culture and people, it's no wonder Japan is considered one of the world's great touring destinations.

Our leisurely 20-day tour has been carefully crafted to blend Japan's fascinating mix of ancient and modern along with all of the country's major attractions. Add to this the magnificent beauty of the Japanese Alps, picturesque gardens, ancient castles and unique Japanese experiences, this tour combines the very best this country has to offer.

With quality accommodation, all breakfasts and many other meals included, this tour really does showcase The Very Best of Japan.



Your holiday includes

Flights with leading scheduled airlines

- Return economy class flights
- Fly with Cathay Pacific via Hong Kong from London Heathrow or Manchester
- Alternatively, fly with Japan Airlines from London Heathrow
- A supplement from £295 per person return will apply
- All airport charges, security charges and any applicable fuel surcharges
- UK Air Passenger Duty

Carefully selected hotels

- Superior hotels in great locations
- All hotel portorage
- Applicable hotel taxes

Many meals worth £536 per person

- 17 breakfasts
- 3 lunches
- 3 dinners

Unforgettable experiences

- Sightseeing tours in Tokyo, Takayama, Kanazawa, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Miyajima Island and Nara
- Learn how to make sushi and buckwheat noodles
- Spend two nights within the region known as Fuji Five Lakes
- View Matsumoto Castle and visit the UNESCO World Heritage Himeji Castle
- Visit a miso factory and sake museum
- Explore the UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawa-go
- Discover the Japanese gardens of Kenroku-en and Koraku-en
- Watch a Maiko performance
- Ride the Bullet Train
- Visit historical Bikan Chiku, Kurashiki

On the ground

- Services of an experienced Tour Manager and local guides
- All overseas transfers
- Modern, air-conditioned coaches throughout

100% confidence

- Your holiday is covered by our Price Promise*
- Your holiday is covered by our Covid Guarantee*
- Your holiday is fully ATOL protected

* For more information on our Price Promise and Covid Guarantee, please see our Terms & Conditions on pages 112-115.



Tokyo Tower, Tokyo



Sushi



Mount Fuji

The Very Best of Japan

Days 1 to 9: UK - Tokyo - Lake Yamanaka - Mount Fuji - Takayama - Shirakawa-go - Kanazawa

Day 1: Depart UK

Depart with Cathay Pacific from London Heathrow or Manchester. Please note, flight schedules and airline carriers are subject to change. **In-flight meals and drinks included**

Day 2: Tokyo, 3 nights

All flights with Cathay Pacific to Tokyo travel via Hong Kong. On arrival into Japan's metropolitan capital, we transfer to the centrally-located Keio Plaza Hotel. **In-flight meals and drinks included**

Alternative airline – Japan Airlines

Should you prefer, fly direct to Tokyo from London Heathrow with Japan Airlines. Supplement from £295 per person return.

Day 3: Tokyo

We start our Japanese adventure in the district of Asakusa, home to Tokyo's oldest temple, Sensoji. Founded in AD645, the temple enshrines a golden image of Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy. The approach to the temple is through the Kaminarimon Gate, which leads to the Nakamise, a shopping street which has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries. We make our way to a local restaurant where we learn the art of Japanese sushi making, and enjoy our own culinary creation for lunch. We finish our day with a visit to Tokyo National Museum. This evening, enjoy a welcome drink with your Tour Manager and fellow travellers, to learn more about our forthcoming adventure. **Breakfast and lunch included**

Day 4: Tokyo

After breakfast we make our way to Tokyo Tower. Standing at 333m, it's 13m taller than the Eiffel Tower, which was the inspiration for its design. Although surpassed in height by Tokyo Skytree in 2012, Tokyo Tower remains a beloved symbol of the city. After a brief photo stop at the impressive Imperial Plaza, we make our way to Japan's most famous Shinto Shrine, Meiji Jingu. Dedicated to Emperor Meiji, the shrine sits in a large forest area that contains more than 100,000 trees, gifted by the people to their beloved emperor.

We return to our hotel, where the remainder of the day is at leisure. This evening is our opportunity to see Tokyo from a different perspective with an optional dinner cruise along the Sumida River. **Breakfast included**

Day 5: Lake Yamanaka, 2 nights

This morning we head to Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, famous for its hot springs and views of Japan's most iconic image, Mount Fuji. Our first stop is Lake Ashi, a crater lake formed over 200,000 years ago. We board our boat for a short cruise on this beautiful lake and take a cable car into Owakudani Valley. The result of a volcanic eruption over 3,000 years ago, the area is still active with many sulphur vents and bubbling hot springs. We continue our journey through picturesque landscapes to the area known as Fuji Five Lakes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our home for the next two nights is the Fuji Marriott Hotel, Lake Yamanaka. After settling into our accommodation, there is free time to relax prior to dinner. **Breakfast and dinner included**

Day 6: Mount Fuji and Fuji Five Lakes Tour Highlight

Fuji-san, or Mr. Fuji as it is more affectionately known, can be a little shy, but fingers crossed a clear sky will reward us with some impressive views. Our first stop is the small, but delightful, Kubota Icchiku Art Museum. Kubota revived the lost art of Tsujigahana silk dyeing and the museum exhibits several of the artist's stunning kimono creations, which depict themes of nature, the cosmos and the seasons. We continue to the Fujisan World Heritage Centre which showcases traditional artwork and videos of this sacred mountain. We learn how to make buckwheat noodles, and continue to the shores of Lake Kawaguchi where there is time to stroll along this picturesque lake. This evening we dine together in our hotel. **Breakfast, lunch and dinner included**

Day 7: Takayama, 2 nights

This morning, we begin our journey towards the majestic Japanese Alps. We stop at Matsumoto castle, the oldest existing castle in Japan, for a fabulous photo opportunity and continue to a miso factory, to discover how this staple Japanese food is made. Afterwards, enjoy a spectacular journey through the mountains to Takayama. Our hotel for the next two nights is the centrally-located Takayama Green Hotel. **Breakfast included**

Day 8: Takayama Tour Highlight

Takayama is best explored on foot and we begin our day with a visit to the morning market. Afterwards, we make our way to the Takayama-Jinya, which served as government headquarters under the Tokugawa shogunate of 1692 to 1871. We end our morning in the heart of Takayama's picturesque old town, lined with traditional houses, shops, restaurants, sake breweries and cafes. Our afternoon is at leisure to enjoy this delightful area. Perhaps sample some of the many delicious delicacies, try some locally-brewed sake, or visit one of the many museums, such as the Festival Floats Exhibition Hall. Tonight, there is the opportunity to dine on Japan's famous Hida beef, a variety of wagyu beef local to this area. **Breakfast included**

Stay in a Ryokan

Overnight from £95 per person



During our time in Takayama, for those who want to experience traditional hospitality, there is an opportunity to spend a night in a Ryokan (traditional Japanese Inn). Enjoy delicious local cuisine, relax in your yukata (casual kimono) and maybe even try the onsen (hot spring bath). Please call for details.

Day 9: Shirakawa-go & Kanazawa, 2 nights

Today we head to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go. The villages, mostly cut off until as recently as the 1960s, are today famous for their traditional style of housing, the Gassho-zukuri, which means "like praying hands". We continue to Kanazawa and the Omicho Market, a lively food market famous for its abundance of fresh seafood, which has been in operation since 1721. Later, visit Normura Samurai House, a restored samurai residence. Finally, we arrive at the Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel. **Breakfast included**



Kiyomizu-dera Temple, Kyoto



Geisha, Kyoto



Tori Gate, Miyajima Island

The Very Best of Japan

Days 10 to 16: Kanazawa - Kyoto - Hiroshima - Miyajima Island - Kurashiki

Day 10: Kanazawa

This morning, we start our day with a visit to the delightful Kenroku-en garden, considered by the Japanese as one of the top three gardens in the country. The name Kenroku-en means the "garden combining six", referring to the six attributes all gardens should include: seclusion, antiquity, spaciousness, human ingenuity, water and scenic views. The city is also famed for gold leaf and it is used in abundance. We visit a local establishment to learn about gold leaf production, and decorate our own chopsticks in gold leaf - we even have the opportunity to purchase a gold leaf ice-cream.

We head to the Higashi Chaya area of the city with its lovely neighbourhood of beautifully-preserved geisha houses. Many have now been converted into restaurants or teahouses, although some are still open to the public. The afternoon is free to continue exploring Kanazawa at your own pace. There is a plethora of museums and local arts and crafts to explore. Alternatively, there is the option to join an afternoon tour which visits the Kutani Pottery and Kagayuzen Kimono Centre. **Breakfast included**

Day 11: Kyoto, 3 nights

This morning, we make our way to Kanazawa Station for our train journey to Kyoto. The capital of Imperial Japan for over 1,000 years, Kyoto is Japan's cultural capital. This afternoon, we head to Arashiyama and its famous Bamboo Grove, where there will be plenty of time to wander through the impressive towering alley of Bamboo. Our hotel for the next three nights is the Kyoto Tokyu Hotel.

Tour Highlight

The distinctive white face, red lips and elaborately decorated hairstyle of the geisha is an enduring image portrayed throughout the globe. Yet the world in which they live remains a mystery. Tonight, we have arranged a traditional Japanese meal, a kaisei, and we will be joined by a maiko, our apprentice geisha, who will perform traditional song and dance. **Breakfast and dinner included**

Day 12: Kyoto

Tour Highlight

We begin our day of sightseeing at the impressive UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kinkaku-ji Temple. Fondly referred to as the Golden Pavilion, this richly decorated golden temple is truly a beautiful sight to behold. Our next stop is another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the rock garden of Ryoanji Temple. The garden's fifteen stones are cleverly arranged so that there is always one rock that is hidden from view. Our final and third UNESCO World Heritage Site of the morning is Kiyomizu-dera Temple. Founded in AD778, the most famous feature of the temple is its wooden veranda, standing some 13 metres above the ground. Later, we head to Gion, Kyoto's famous geisha district, to take part in a traditional tea ceremony. Tonight, there is an opportunity to experience a Japanese barbecue at a local restaurant. **Breakfast included**

Day 13: Fushimi Inari Shrine

Today, we head out of the city to the Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its tunnels of more than 10,000 closely-spaced torii gates, each of which has been individually donated. We visit a sake museum to discover the brewing and production process of this famous Japanese rice wine. Later, return to the city for an afternoon at leisure. If you prefer, you can join an optional tour of Sanju-Sangendo, with an opportunity to paint and take away your own paper fan. Tonight, there is the option to sample Japanese shabushabu at a local restaurant. **Breakfast included**

Day 14: Bullet Train, Hiroshima, 2 nights

After a leisurely breakfast, we transfer to the station for our journey on Japan's iconic Bullet Train. Travelling at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour, the train smoothly whisks us across the country to our next port of call, Hiroshima. Hiroshima is perhaps best known for being the place where an atomic bomb was dropped during the Second World War. This afternoon, we talk to a survivor of the attack, visit the Memorial Peace Park and its moving museum, as well as the Atomic Bomb Dome. After a thought-provoking day, we transfer to the Righa Royal Hotel, ideally located for exploring the city. **Breakfast included**

Day 15: Miyajima Island

A morning visit takes us to the peaceful and pretty island of Miyajima, home to the UNESCO Word Heritage listed Itsukushima Shrine. Later, there is plenty of time to wander around the city's pretty streets. Our afternoon has been left at leisure, and we highly recommend a stroll to Hiroshima Castle, Shukkeien garden and Orizuru Tower, which are all within easy walking distance of our hotel. Tonight, we have the opportunity to visit a local Okonomiyaki restaurant and learn how to make this famous and delicious dish, associated with the Hiroshima area. **Breakfast included**

We Recommend

Learn to make Okonomiyaki

With some 2,000 Okonomiyaki restaurants in Hiroshima alone, this dish is adored by locals.



Day 16: Kurashiki, Overnight

Travel to the old merchant settlement of Kurashiki, whose main draw is its beautiful willow-lined canal and historical Bikan district. Many former storehouses have been converted into museums, boutiques and cafes, providing the perfect backdrop for a leisurely stroll. This afternoon we visit Koraku-en Garden, another of Japan's top three gardens. It is most aptly described as a "strolling garden", due to its variety of views from the pathways which wind through the pond, stream, lawns and teahouse. We return to Kurashiki for an overnight stay at the Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel, just a short walk from the Bikan district. **Breakfast included**



Himeji Castle



Japanese Tempura



Todaiji Temple, Nara

The Very Best of Japan

Days 17 to 20: Himeji Castle - Nara - Osaka - UK

Day 17: Himeji Castle - Osaka, 2 nights

Tour Highlight

Today we journey to our final destination, Osaka via the city of Himeji, famous for Japan's finest surviving feudal castle, Himeji Castle. The first fortifications of this UNESCO World Heritage Site were completed in the 1400's. Gradually enlarged over the centuries, the castle complex, as it survives today, is over 400 years old and is an imposing and majestic site. After exploring the castle and grounds, we make our way to Osaka. Our home for our final two nights is the delightful Hotel Nikko Osaka. **Breakfast and lunch included**

Day 18: Nara

Our sightseeing today takes us to Nara, Japan's first permanent capital. One of the first sights we will experience is the thousands of sacred deer that roam freely throughout the city, and have learned to bow for treats! We visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Todaiji Temple. Founded in AD745, the vast temple took over 15 years to complete. The main hall houses a colossal bronze Buddha statue and remains the world's largest wooden building. After a morning of sightseeing, we return to Osaka, where our afternoon has been left free to relax. **Breakfast included**

Day 19: Depart Osaka

This morning, we travel to Osaka Airport for our flight to the UK. All flights will travel via Hong Kong. Alternatively, if flying Japan Airlines, you will travel to the UK via Tokyo. **Breakfast and inflight meals and drinks included**

Day 20: Arrive UK

After 20 spectacular days, we arrive into the UK, bringing our incredible Very Best of Japan tour to an end. **In-flight meals and drinks included**



Nara Park

Departure Dates & Prices

2023 Departures

23 September 2023	SOLD OUT
08 October 2023	SOLD OUT
28 October 2023	SOLD OUT
04 November 2023	SOLD OUT

2024 Departures

23 March 2024	SOLD OUT
26 March 2024*	£5,795 per person
27 March 2024	SOLD OUT
30 March 2024	SOLD OUT
04 May 2024	SOLD OUT
07 May 2024	SOLD OUT
12 May 2024	£5,495 per person

* This tour operates in reverse, beginning in Osaka and finishing in Tokyo. All inclusions remain the same.

Prices

Prices are per person based on two people sharing a twin or double room.

Single occupancy supplement
£1,595.

Deposit

£1,000 per person if travelling Economy Class, £1,950 per person if travelling in Premium Economy, and £3,750 per person for Business Class.

Visa information

British Citizens do not require a visa when travelling to Japan.

Flight upgrades

Cathay Pacific upgrade to Premium Economy from £1,295 per person return, or Business Class from £3,395 per person return.

Japan Airlines (JAL) upgrade to Premium Economy from £1,195 per person return, or Business Class from £3,295 per person return.

Important Information

Prices and flight upgrades are subject to fuel surcharges and the availability of flights. The correct price will be confirmed before you book.

Full Terms & Conditions are available on pages 112-115.

Call to book

Our award-winning travel experts are happy to answer any questions you may have, and to help you book your holiday with Distant Journeys.

Call FREE on 0800 141 3731

Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.30pm **Saturday** 9.00am - 5.00pm
Sunday Open in peak season. See website for details.

Should you prefer, please feel free to email us with your enquiry.
Email: enquiries@distantjourneys.co.uk

