



ACADEMY
TRAVEL

TAILORED
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS



JAPAN UNMASKED

NATURE, HISTORY & CULTURE

Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima

OVERVIEW

The island nation of Japan boasts a long, rich history dating from the 3rd century. Its cultural and artistic sensibilities have been forged from the foundations of its long-reigning monarchy, feudal shogun warlords and deep Shinto and Zen Buddhist traditions.

On this 18-day tour led by Judy Tenzing, we unmask the many layers of this fascinating country through its wealth of museums, temples, gardens and shrines to discover a place of natural beauty and a dignified nation that embodies both humility and pride, maintaining age-old traditions while living in a modern and truly global society.

Our tour begins in Tokyo, where we dip strategically into what the city has to offer, from serene Shinto and Buddhist shrines to the quirky delights of shopping and entertainment districts. From there we travel via Japan's famous Shinkansen, or bullet train, to explore a range of traditional and contemporary arts, Samurai and geisha culture, and famous Japanese gardens and shrines. We pay our respects to the tragedy that happened at Hiroshima and soak in the charm of a few of Japan's coastal cities. Each experience provides another glimpse behind the mask and into the beauty of this wonderful country.



TOUR LEADER

Judy Tenzing is a historian with a passion for all things South and East Asian – India, the Himalaya, Japan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

TOUR DATES

October 16 - November 2, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$15,980 per person, twin share
\$2,340 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Tokyo (4 nights), Kanazawa (2 nights), Kyoto (2 nights), Awaji Island (2 nights), Hiroshima (2 nights), Fukuoka (3 nights), Kumamoto (1 night), Tokyo (1 night)

INCLUSIONS

17 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels. All breakfasts, 5 lunches and 7 dinners. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, all entrance fees and tipping.

DETAILED ITINERARY



Start & Finish

The tour starts at 7.00pm on Wednesday 16 October, at the Asakusa View Hotel Annex Roku, Tokyo. The tour ends after breakfast on Saturday 2 November, with a group transfer to Tokyo International Airport.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Tokyo

Immerse yourself in a dizzying melange of the old and the new: from traditional art and shrines to the vibrant counterculture of the Harajuku district, Tokyo will leave you feeling exhilarated.

Kenrokuen

Step into the peaceful design of one of Japan's best landscapes. Kenrokuen embodies the essential attributes of a perfect garden: spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and expansive views.

Hiroshima

Honour human resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy at the Peace Memorial Museum & Genbaku Dome. Both sites memorialize the day the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, changing the world forever.

Kyoto

Embrace the beauty of traditional Japanese culture in the country's former capital and spiritual heart, with serene temples, colourful shrines, and geisha culture, all situated amidst beautiful natural scenery.

Kyushu Island

Discover the endless energy, wild beauty and warm smiles of Japan's most southerly main island (internationally famous for its tonkotsu ramen), touring the cities of Fukuoka, Kitakyushu and Kumamoto.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

Wednesday 16 October

Arrive Tokyo

We gather in our hotel this evening to meet and greet tour leader Judy Tenzing and fellow travellers before enjoying a welcome dinner in the hotel restaurant. Overnight Tokyo (D)

Thursday 17 October

Tokyo

This morning we depart by coach for the Edo period garden of Koshikawa Korakuen, built in the Tokyo residence of the ruling Tokugawa family. As with most traditional Japanese gardens, Korakuen reproduces famous landscapes in miniature using ponds, stones, trees and manmade hills to replicate Japanese scenery. Our next stop is the neighbourhood of Asakusa for a visit to the colourful ancient Buddhist Sensoji Temple and a stroll down bustling Nakamise Shopping Street. After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue to Tokyo National Museum, where we take in a special exhibit. Upon our return to the hotel, there is time to freshen up before we walk to a local restaurant for dinner. Overnight Tokyo (B, L, D)

Friday 18 October

Harajuku

We gather for a talk in the hotel before heading out by coach for a visit to the Yamatane Museum of Art. Along with a rotating collection of contemporary Japanese paintings, the museum specialises in Nihonga, a Japanese painting style using mineral pigments and ink on silk or paper. After lunch together, it's on to Tokyo's buzzy Harajuku district, renowned for its colourful art, trendy vintage stores and boutiques and, of course, head-turning street fashion. We then continue to the nearby Ota Memorial Museum of Art to view its fantastic collection of Ukiyo-e woodblock print and painting masterpieces by such renowned artists as Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro. The afternoon finishes with a visit to the Meiji Shrine, a Shinto haven of peace and tranquillity in this bustling city. Returning to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Tokyo (B, L)



Saturday 19 October **Roppongi**

The morning's coach ride takes us past the National Diet building, where high-level political decision-making takes place, to the National Art Centre in Roppongi. Housed in a stunning glass and steel building designed by Kisho Kurokawa, the Art Centre features rotating art exhibits. Our next stop is the upscale Ginza shopping district, with an afternoon at leisure to explore the boutique shops and luxury department stores, perhaps stopping for a bite to eat. The option is yours to return by coach or stay longer and venture back to the hotel by Tokyo's famed subway. Overnight Tokyo (B)

Sunday 20 October **To Kanazawa**

Today we depart Tokyo and head west via Japan's famous bullet train to Kanazawa, which during the Edo period was Japan's second largest feudal seat. Upon checking into the hotel, we pay a visit to Kanazawa Castle, the seat of the powerful Maeda clan. After burning several times, only two storehouses and the gate remain. But the real star is adjacent to the castle. Celebrated as one of Japan's most beautiful gardens, Kenrokuen was designed using the six essential attributes of a perfect garden: spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and broad views. The afternoon is free until we meet in the early evening and walk to our dinner venue, where we'll enjoy some local sake and a multi-course traditional kaiseki dinner, prepared with fresh local ingredients aligned to the season. Overnight Kanazawa (B, D)

Monday 21 October **Kanazawa**

This morning begins with a stroll through the Nagamachi Samurai District, taking us to the Nomura house, a restored samurai residence that displays artefacts from the samurai era. Afterward you can explore the traditional shopping district of Omicho Market with free time for lunch. This afternoon features the Higashi Chaya district, where tea house guests can still be entertained by geisha who perform song and dance on traditional instruments and where shops sell traditional gold-leaf crafts, a Kanazawa specialty. There is an option to visit the D.T. Suzuki Museum, where you can learn about this prominent Zen Buddhist philosopher's life and religious scholarship. Overnight Kanazawa (B)

Tuesday 22 October **To Kyoto**

We depart Kanazawa by bullet train this morning for the former Japanese capital of Kyoto, a famously beautiful city, with great cultural achievements. On arrival we visit the Kiyomizu Temple complex, built entirely without using nails. First constructed in 798, the building that stands now is a reconstruction from 1633. From here we stroll down the hill through the shops and teahouses of the Higashiyama district to famous Yasaka Shrine, the centre of many rituals and events. Honouring husband and





wife gods Susanoo-no-Mikoto and Kushinadahime-no-Mikoto, the shrine is considered a spiritual love spot. Later in the evening we enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Kyoto (B, D)

Wednesday 23 October

Kyoto

The morning begins with a talk in the hotel before we depart by coach for the Buddhist temple of Sanjusangendo, famous for its 1001 statues of Kannon, the thousand-armed goddess of mercy. We then walk the short distance to Kyoto National Museum. One of Japan's major art museums, it features an extensive collection of archaeological relics, sculptures, ceramics and costumes. After lunch, we depart by coach for Gion, Kyoto's most famous Geisha district. Strolling this charming entertainment district, we'll likely see hostesses in colourful kimonos and parasols making their way to or from teahouses or crossing the wooden Tatsumi Bridge. The rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to enjoy. Overnight Kyoto (B, L)

Thursday 24 October

To Awaji Island

Known as a supplier of livestock, fruits, vegetables and marine treasures to the Imperial Court, Awaji Island is a gourmand's delight that also features multiple theme parks and other interactive experiences. Our first stop is the picturesque feudal Sumoto Castle, with its well-preserved fortified walls serving as a vantage point for the island. Next is Japan's oldest shrine, Izenagi Jingu Shrine, the grounds of which feature an ancient "husband-and-wife" camphor tree said to bring good luck to relationships. Our last stop is Akashi Kaikyo National Government Park, featuring colourful seasonal gardens and large flower sculptures. Tonight we'll have dinner on the island before settling into our hotel. Overnight Awaji Island (B, D)

Friday 25 October

Awaji Island

Today we continue exploring the island, beginning at the giant red torii gate of Onokorojime Shrine. We then head to the Awaji Puppet Theatre Museum to get acquainted with one of Awaji's best-known traditional arts, practiced on Awaji for hundreds of years. Our visit takes in the displays of older and newer puppets at the museum as we learn how troupes – which at puppetry's peak numbered 38 – put on shows. Later, we visit the Honpukuji Water Temple, famous for its annex lotus pond and subterranean Fudo Myō Buddhist temple designed by Tado Ando. In the afternoon we take a cruise to see the famous Naruto whirlpools, a phenomena created by tidal movements between the Seto Inland Sea and the Pacific. The rest of the afternoon and evening is at leisure. Overnight Awaji Island (B)

Saturday 26 October

To Hiroshima

A bullet train takes us this morning on the three-hour trip to Hiroshima, a city that has vibrantly rebounded from its tragic World War II history. We begin at the Peace Memorial Museum, a somber place composed of a beautiful park that includes a building now known as the Atomic Bomb Dome, still standing





in much the same condition as it was moments after the explosion. We tour the museum, which offers a collection of photos and testimonials from survivors of the 1945 nuclear bomb, before walking through the memorial site. We then make our way to our hotel, with the evening at leisure. Overnight Hiroshima (B)

Sunday 27 October
Miyajima

Today begins with a short walk to Motoyasu Sanbashi bridge (near the Peace Memorial) to pick up the ferry that departs to Miyajima. We begin with the Itsukushima Shrine, marked by a large orange torii gate that appears to float at high tide and said to be one of the most beautiful sights in Japan. The shrine, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a complex of halls and pathways originally built on stilts so that commoners could visit without defiling the island with their footprints. After lunch, featuring the local oysters that are a specialty of the island, you have the option to ascend Mt Misen and enjoy the autumn foliage by cable car. There will be free time for shopping before the ferry departs back to our hotel. Overnight Hiroshima (B, L)

Monday 28 October
To Fukuoka

Continuing our journey south, we take the train to the busy hub of Fukuoka on Japan's Kyushu Island. A centre of nightlife, shopping and cuisine (not to mention great beaches), Fukuoka also has a rich spiritual and historical legacy. On arrival, we enjoy lunch in a local restaurant, before visiting Shofukuji Zen Temple, Japan's first and oldest. We then continue to another temple, Tochoji, famed for its massive 10.8m wooden Buddha statue, a five-story pagoda and other ancient carvings and exhibits. You can enjoy free time after our return to the hotel. Overnight Fukuoka (B, L)

Tuesday 29 October
Kyushu National Museum

This morning is spent at Kyushu National Museum, which tells the story of Japan through the history of its interaction and cultural exchanges with other Asian countries. Its distinctive blue mirrored glass structure houses a significant collection of well-displayed artifacts, along with short movies and rotating special exhibits. After we return, the afternoon and evening are at leisure, with an optional guided visit of the Hakata open-air food stands, 100 food stalls festooned with colourful drapes selling ramen, yakitori grilled chicken skewers, dumplings, and much more. Overnight Fukuoka (B)

Wednesday 30 October
Kitakyushu

Today we head to Kitakyushu, the northernmost city on Kyushu Island. Known for its picturesque landscaping, history, delicious food and regional festivals, Kitakyushu has been an important port city since the 1960s and is a hub for both land and marine traffic. We begin with a stroll along the waterway past the 1900s red brick Moji Customs building to the



HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are excellent four-star standard.

Tokyo, Asakusa View Hotel Annex Rokku

(5 nights, total)

www.viewhotels.co.jp

Kanazawa, Koko Hotel Premier

(2 nights)

www.koko-hotels.com

Kyoto, Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo

(2 nights)

global.miyakohotels.ne.jp

Awaji Island, Grand Nikko Awaji

(2 nights)

www.awaji.grandnikko.com

Hiroshima, Grand Prince Hotel

(2 nights)

www.princehotels.com

Fukuoka, Hotel Monterey Fukuoka

(3 nights)

www.hotelmonterey.co.jp

Kumamoto, Hotel Nikko Kumamoto

(1 night)

nikko-kumamoto.co.jp

WEATHER

October is perhaps the best time to travel in Japan. Temperatures are generally still warm (average October highs in the low 20s, dropping to around 15 at night), but it's less humid, and there is little rain. Autumn leaves begin appearing at higher altitudes, and generally there are fewer tourists, so it's less crowded than peak season.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. For full details of the fitness requirements of this tour, please visit our website.



Kitakyushu Railway History Museum. Located next to charming Mojiko Station, the museum features historic train carriages you can board, along with indoor exhibits on the history of Japanese railways. Next we revisit our earthier aspects at the TOTO toilet museum. Located in a elegantly designed two-story building, the museum conveys lessons on the history and evolution of hygiene and toilets in Japan. The afternoon and evening are yours to enjoy. Overnight Fukuyoka (B)

Thursday 31 October

To Kumamoto

Departing Fukuyoka today, we first stop at Yoshinogari Historical Park, an expansive archaeological site of a well-preserved moat-encircled settlement from the Yayoi Period (300BCE to 300CE). Yoshinogari features pit dwellings, storehouses and other structures, along with over 2000 tombs. We then join the bullet train for the rest of the journey to Kumamoto. Upon disembarking, we stop at Suizenji Jojuen Garden located on the side of Kumamoto Castle. This traditional Japanese garden features a teahouse, a natural pond with colourful koi, a miniature recreation of the Tokaido road between Tokyo and Kyoto, and even a miniature Mt Fuji! After time to freshen up in our hotel, we meet again for dinner. Overnight Kumamoto (B, D)

Friday 1 November

To Tokyo

This morning we fly back to Tokyo and transfer to the hotel. There is time to simply relax or enjoy some of the many Tokyo attractions not covered on the tour. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Tokyo (B, D)

Saturday 2 November

Depart Tokyo

The tour concludes after breakfast. A transfer will be arranged to the airport for your onward journey. (B)

A NOTE ON THE ITINERARY

This itinerary is subject to change. Hotels and activities may be amended to improve the itinerary. We will advise of these changes as they occur.



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

jamal@academytravel.com.au

 info@academytravel.com.au

 academytravel.com.au