



Art & Culture Japan

12 Days / 11 Nights

Day 1: Arrive Osaka

Arrive at the architecturally impressive Kansai International Airport, situated on a custom built artificial island in Osaka bay. You will be welcomed by our airport representative who will assist you with transferring by limousine bus to your hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Tonight you will be staying at The Imperial Hotel. Founded in 1890 as Japan's first state guesthouse, this 'Grand Dame' of Japanese hotels offers a mix of refined public areas and chic stylish rooms. Many of the hotel's design motifs were crafted by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Overnight in Imperial Hotel, Osaka

Day 2: Osaka

(B)

This morning we recommend you visit the National Museum of Modern Art Osaka.

Located on an island in the middle of Osaka city,

this subterranean museum focuses mostly on post-war art and the museum itself could be considered a modern art piece.

In the afternoon, you can continue sightseeing in Osaka or make the 45min trip by train to Nara.

For 74 years during the 8th century Nara was Japan's capital and many of the temples and shrines built at that time still remain.

Nara National Museum was established in 1889 and is noted for its impressive collection of Buddhist art.

Other attractions in Nara include Todaiji Temple, the world's largest wooden building and home to Japan's largest Buddha, and Kasuga Taisha, Nara's most celebrated shrine.

Option: Osaka has both Noh (Japanese traditional) and Bunraku (Japanese puppet) theaters.

If there is a performance as the time of your visit, we can arrange tickets.

Overnight in Imperial Hotel, Osaka

Day 3: Osaka - Hiroshima

(B)

Time to leave Osaka behind as you take your first ride on the world famous *Shinkansen* bullet train. Capable of reaching speeds of up to 300 km/h (186mph), the *Hikari* (meaning light) model Shinkansen takes just 2 hours to reach Hiroshima.

Perhaps more than any other city in the world, Hiroshima is famous for one moment in history. On 6 August 1945, it became the first target of an atomic bomb. However, Hiroshima has risen phoenix-like from the ashes, and rebuilt itself as one of Japan's most laid back, vibrant cities full of wide boulevards and Art Museums, great food and friendly, welcoming people.

Today you will have the chance to explore some of Hiroshima's world class museums. The Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art features artists such as Henry Moore and Andy Warhol; the Prefectural Art Museum which collects and exhibits the traditional arts of Hiroshima, craftwork of Japan and Asia and is located next to the beautiful Shukkeien Garden; and the Hiroshima Museum of Art which displays modern Western Art in addition to modern Japanese paintings in Western Style. For a museum of a different sort, check out the Hiroshima City Manga Library, containing tens of thousands of Japanese comic books.

Your accommodation in Hiroshima is at Hotel Flex. Selected for an Urban Design Award, this ultra modern minimalist hotel has rooms facing directly out onto the river which feature individual design enhancements tailored to the landscape in order to provide guests with an unusual yet relaxing experience.

Overnight at Hotel Flex Hiroshima

Day 4: Hiroshima

(B)

Your guide will meet you at your hotel and take you by street car to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in central Hiroshima.

The area where the park now lies was ground zero for the Atomic Bomb on 6th August 1945. After the bombing the Memorial Park was created and dedicated to those who lost their lives in the attack.

Stroll through the park and find out the meaning behind the many memorials, monuments and statues in the park.

At the Children's Peace Monument you will learn to fold an Origami crane to place at the statue of Sadoko, a young girl that died as a result of radiation poisoning. She who was told if she could fold 1000 paper cranes she would get well. Unfortunately she was not able to reach 1000, however people come from all over the world to place cranes at her monument in tribute to Sadoko.

Head into the Peace Memorial Museum for a talk by private talk with an Atomic Bomb survivor. They will describe his or her own A-bomb experience and give facts about the A-bombing, as well as answer any questions you may have.

Finally, you will have the chance to walk through the museum itself at your own pace.

In the afternoon, you can take a short ferry ride to Miyajima Island, a famous wooded island located in the Inland Sea near Hiroshima. Here you will find perhaps the most photographed site in Japan - The Floating Torii Gate.

Designated as one of Japan's '3 Most Beautiful Views', the shrine itself dates back to the 6th century and is designed in a pier like structure. Mere 'commoners' were not allowed to set foot on this holy place.

Take time to explore the island and its many shrines and temples, sample local goodies like maple leaf shaped cakes, and have the option to hike up to the peak of the island, Mt. Misen, to see spectacular views of the surrounding islands.

Overnight at Hotel Flex Hiroshima

Day 5: Hiroshima - Naoshima

(B)

Back on the *Shinkansen* this morning as you make your way to the Naoshima, Japan's Art Island. Formerly a struggling fishing village lying in the Inland Sea, the island's fortunes was transformed with the establishment of the Benesse Art Site, showcasing the best up-and-coming Japanese artists alongside international talent.

On Naoshima you will be staying at the Benesse House. Every room has its own individual design and art work, with 49 guest rooms across 4 buildings: Museum, Annex, Park and Beach, all designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando.

Spend this afternoon taking in the Benesse House Museum and surrounds, displaying work by Hockney, Pollock and Warhol.

Overnight at Benesse House.

Day 6: Naoshima - Kurashiki

(B,D)

You have a full day to explore all the island has to offer.

The hotel has a free shuttle bus that circles around the island between all the main sights.

Head to the sleepy fishing village of Honmura, whose old, wooden Japanese houses have been turned into art installations.

The Chichu Art Museum is also designed by Tadao Ando and is a piece of art in itself.

Works by Claude Monet, Walter de Maria and James Turrell are all featured.

There are pieces of art scattered throughout the island, turning it into a giant open air museum.

In the afternoon, take the ferry back to the mainland and a short train ride will bring you to Kurashiki.

This quaint canal town served as an important rice distribution center in the Edo Period (1603-1867). In fact, the name "Kurashiki" can be roughly translated as "town of storehouses", which refers to the storehouses in which the rice was kept.

These white-walled former storehouses have been beautifully preserved and many have been converted into museums, boutiques and cafes.

Tonight you will stay in a 250 year old Japanese *ryokan*. With 11 unique rooms featuring tatami flooring, sliding *shoji* rice paper doors and comfy futons, this is the quintessential

Japanese accommodation experience

A sumptuous Japanese *kaiseki* multi course meal will be served to you tonight.

Overnight at Tsurugata Ryokan, Kurashiki

Day 7: Kurashiki

(B,D)

Start your day with a visit to the Ohara Museum of Art, Japan's first Museum of Western Art.

The main building features works by Picasso, El Greco, Gauguin, Modigliani, Rodin, Klee, Pollock and Kandinsky among others, whilst the Annex building features a number of works by Japanese artists.

There are numerous other museums and sites of interest in Kurashiki, including an Archaeological Museum, Museum of Folkcraft, the City Art Museum, and Museum of Natural History. Or, you can just spend your day wandering through the narrow streets and along the canals, browsing craft shops and sipping *ocha* in cafes.

You can also choose to make a half day trip to Okayama (15min), to visit Koraku-en. Ranked one of Japan's 'Top Three Gardens', this Japanese style garden with waterfalls, tiny shrines, teahouses, miniature maple forests and a lotus pond is delightful to stroll through.

Dinner will again be served at your ryokan tonight.

Overnight at Tsurugata Ryokan, Kurashiki.

Day 8: Kurashiki - Kyoto

(B)

Lying just 90min by train to the east lies Kyoto, Japan's cultural capital.

Kyoto is home to an astonishing 2000 Shrines and Temples, including 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sights.

Your accommodation in Kyoto is the Hotel Granvia. This modern hotel is part of the Kyoto Station building, designed by the architect Hiroshi Hara and constructed to celebrate the 1,200th anniversary of the foundation of Kyoto as the Heian capital in 1997.

The futuristic building is at odds with Kyoto's ancient history and was the cause of controversy when first built. The hotel has its own private art collection with over 1,000 pieces throughout the hotel.

This afternoon, we have arranged for a private visit to the home of a local Calligraphy Instructor.

Our representative will meet you at your hotel and take you by taxi.

Your Instructor will explain how Kanji (Chinese pictographs) came to Japan, and about the three kinds of characters (Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana) along with which one Japanese people choose to use on what occasions.

You can try writing some characters with the advice/support of the Calligraphy Instructor, which you can take home as a souvenir.

Overnight at Granvia Hotel, Kyoto

Day 9: Kyoto

(B)

This morning you will be met at your hotel by your knowledgeable local guide and taken to the Miho Museum.

It was designed by the renowned architect, I. M. Pei, and one of the most interesting aspects of the museum is the design of its structures, and especially how they are integrated into their surroundings. This is highlighted in the approach to the museum's entrance as it leads through a mixture of man-made and natural environments.

The museum's exhibits consist of works from ancient civilizations including the Egyptians, Romans, and various Asian cultures.

On return to Kyoto, visit Kiyomizu (Pure Water) Temple. From the 13m high veranda jutting out from the Main Hall you can enjoy amazing views of the whole of Kyoto, whilst pondering the fact that both the Main Hall and Veranda were built without the use of nails or any kind of joiners.

Finish off the day with a stroll through the atmospheric Higashiyama district, whose busy lanes lead up to Kiyomizu and are filled with quaint shops selling souvenirs including the renowned Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, sweets and pickles.

Overnight at Hotel Granvia, Kyoto

Day 10 : Kyoto - Tokyo

(B)

One last *Shinkansen* ride to your final destination - Tokyo.

Japan's capital since 1868 and home to over 12 million residents; Tokyo is one of the most exciting cities in the world. From the world's biggest fish market to all night Karaoke sessions, the bright neon lights of Shinjuku to the serenity of Meiji Shrine this city really does have it all.

You are staying at the Park Hotel Tokyo, located in the exciting Shiodome development. A member of the Design Hotel Group, the hotel is built around a central atrium and features artwork by Monique Le Houelleur throughout the hotel and guest rooms.

This afternoon is free for you to start exploring this vibrant city.

Overnight at Park Hotel, Tokyo

Day 11 : Tokyo

(B)

This morning you will be met by a local guide for a day of sightseeing in Tokyo utilizing the impressive Metro system.

Today's tour is themed around 'Old and New'.

The morning will be devoted to 'Old' - you will visit Ueno Park, situated in Tokyo's *shitamachi* (old district) and home to some of Tokyo's most prestigious museums and galleries.

You can choose to visit Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum or the National Museum of Western Art.

The afternoon is devoted to 'New' - with a visit to Roppongi, Tokyo's self-proclaimed 'Art District' and home to some of Japan's newest and most cutting edge galleries and

museums.

Your options here are the Mori Art Museum, located on the 53 Floor of the Mori Building, Tokyo National Art Centre or the Suntory Museum of Art.

Overnight at Park Hotel, Tokyo

Day 11 : Depart Tokyo

(B)

Your day is free until your included transfer to the airport by train or Airport Limousine Bus.

*******END OF SERVICES*******

E&OE