



Japan's Golden Route

9 Days / 8 Nights

Day 1: Tokyo Arrival

Arrive in Tokyo, where you will be welcomed by our airport representative who will assist you with transferring by either direct train or limousine bus to your hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

Overnight in Tokyo.

Day 2: Tokyo

(B)

This morning your guide will meet you at your hotel. The day will begin with a stroll through Hama-Rikyu Teien, a former private garden of an *Edo* Period lord. Take the chance to break up your walk with a stop in a tea house on a small island on the park's lake, where we will have the opportunity to witness a short tea ceremony.

You will then have a chance to view Tokyo from a different angle as you take a boat cruise along the Sumida River.

Next stop will be Asakusa, part of Tokyo's *Shitamachi*, or old town. Asakusa is home to Sensoji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple, and is also the city's oldest *Geisha* district. The streets around Sensoji have many traditional shops selling Japanese crafts and souvenirs and are a delight to wander through.

In the afternoon, head across Tokyo to Omotesando, commonly referred to as Tokyo's Champs-Elysee. This broad, tree lined avenue features a multitude of fashion flagship stores designed by internationally renowned architects within a short distance of each other.

At the end of the day you will have time to explore Meiji Shrine; Tokyo's most famous, dedicated to the spirit of the late Emperor Meiji.

Note: The order of this itinerary may change according to the location of your hotel.

Overnight in Tokyo.

Day 3: Tokyo - Optional Day Trip

(B)

Today is a free today for you to explore this amazing city. Make an early start to visit the world Famous Tsukji Fish Market, visit the electronics district of Akihabara or discover Tokyo's world class museums and art galleries.

Or, you can use your included Japan Rail Pass to make an excursion outside of Tokyo to one of the following:

Kamakura

One of Japan's former capitals, Kamakura is a delightful seaside town home to many ancient temples and the Daibutsu, a giant bronze Buddha.

Nikko

Sitting high in the mountains of Nikko National Park, Nikko houses the Toshogu Shrine complex and mausoleum, Japan's most extravagant display of religious architecture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will provide you with detailed information of all the options available to you.

Overnight in Tokyo.

Day 4: Tokyo - Hakone/Mt Fuji

(B,D)

Today leave Tokyo behind and make the 2 hour journey to Hakone, the gateway to Mt Fuji and surrounding national park. This small town is famous for its *onsen*, or natural hot springs, and has natural beauty in abundance.

You will stay in a traditional Japanese-style *ryokan* accommodation, complete with tatami mats, *shoji* rice paper sliding doors and *onsen* baths.

This evening, relax in your yukata, or lightweight kimono, and dine on a sumptuous *kaiseki* multi course meal, served by kimono clad waitresses.

An onsen after dinner is highly recommended before you bed down on your futon.

Overnight in Hakone.

Day 5: Hakone/Mt Fuji

(B,D)

A full day to explore all that the Fuji Hakone National Park has to offer.

Armed with your included Transport Pass, you can take advantage of the numerous forms of transport on offer throughout the Park. Ride the world's second longest cable car up Mt Owakudani, passing over sulfurous fumes, hot springs and hot rivers in this volcanic area, where you can eat an egg hard boiled in the sulfuric hot springs which make Hakone famous. If you do, it will add seven years to your life!

A majestic replica pirate ship will sweep you across the Lake Ashinoko, a lake formed by a volcanic eruption 3000 years ago, and the Hakone Tozan 'switchback train' zig zags though the mountains, giving amazing views of the surrounding valleys.

Throughout the day you will have the chance to get a glimpse of Mt Fuji, however please keep in mind that she is a notoriously shy mountain and it needs to be a clear day.

Hakone offers many other options as well, including the Hakone Open Air Museum, featuring sculptures from world renowned artists set against the back drop of Hakone's picturesque mountains. Of course, there are hundreds of *onsen* to try as well.

We will provide you with detailed information of all the options available to you.

Overnight in Hakone.

Day 6: Hakone to Kyoto

(B)

Time for one last soak in the onsen, before undertaking the 2 hour journey by the world famous *Shinkansen* bullet train to Japan's cultural capital, Kyoto.

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

This afternoon we have in store a truly amazing experience as you learn about Japanese culture in a beautifully restored *machiya* (traditional wooden townhouse).

First, you will have the opportunity to wear a traditional *kimono*. You will be dressed by a professional kimono dresser and be able to take pictures afterwards.

Next, you will participate in a *chanoyu*, or Tea Ceremony. Your instructor will give insight into the history behind all the intricate movements of the ceremony, and you will also be able to try your hand at making your own tea.

Overnight in Kyoto.

Day 7: Kyoto

(B)

Today you explore the former imperial capital with a knowledgeable local guide, utilizing Kyoto's comprehensive bus system to visit some of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites.

You will start your day with a visit to Nijo Castle.

This ornamental castle was built by the founder of the Edo Shogunate as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by stunning surrounding gardens. The main building was completed in 1603, and is famous for its Momoyama architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors.

Continue on to Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion. Originally built as a retirement villa for the *Shogun*, after his death it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples.

The final stop of the morning is Daitoku-ji Zen temple complex, which consists of a main temple and 22 sub-temples. You will visit Daisen-in sub temple, which was founded in 1464 and has one of Japan's best Zen rock gardens, perfect for a spot of Zazen meditation after a busy morning.

After lunch, 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 Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, sweets and pickles.

Overnight in Kyoto.

Day 8: Kyoto - Nara

(B)

This morning you will make the short 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.

We would recommend visiting Todaiji Temple, the world's largest wooden building and home to Japan's largest Buddha, and Kasuga Taisha, Nara's most celebrated shrine.

You will also have time to wander through Nara Park, called Deer Park by locals due to the large population of tame deer living there.

The afternoon is free for you to continue your sightseeing in Nara or Kyoto.

Overnight in Kyoto.

Day 9: Kyoto Departure

(B)

Departure day. At leisure until your included transfer by direct train to Kansai Airport.

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

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