



Japan in Autumn

A land of striking beauty

Departs 3 September 2022

Blue Dot Travel
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JAPAN IN AUTUMN

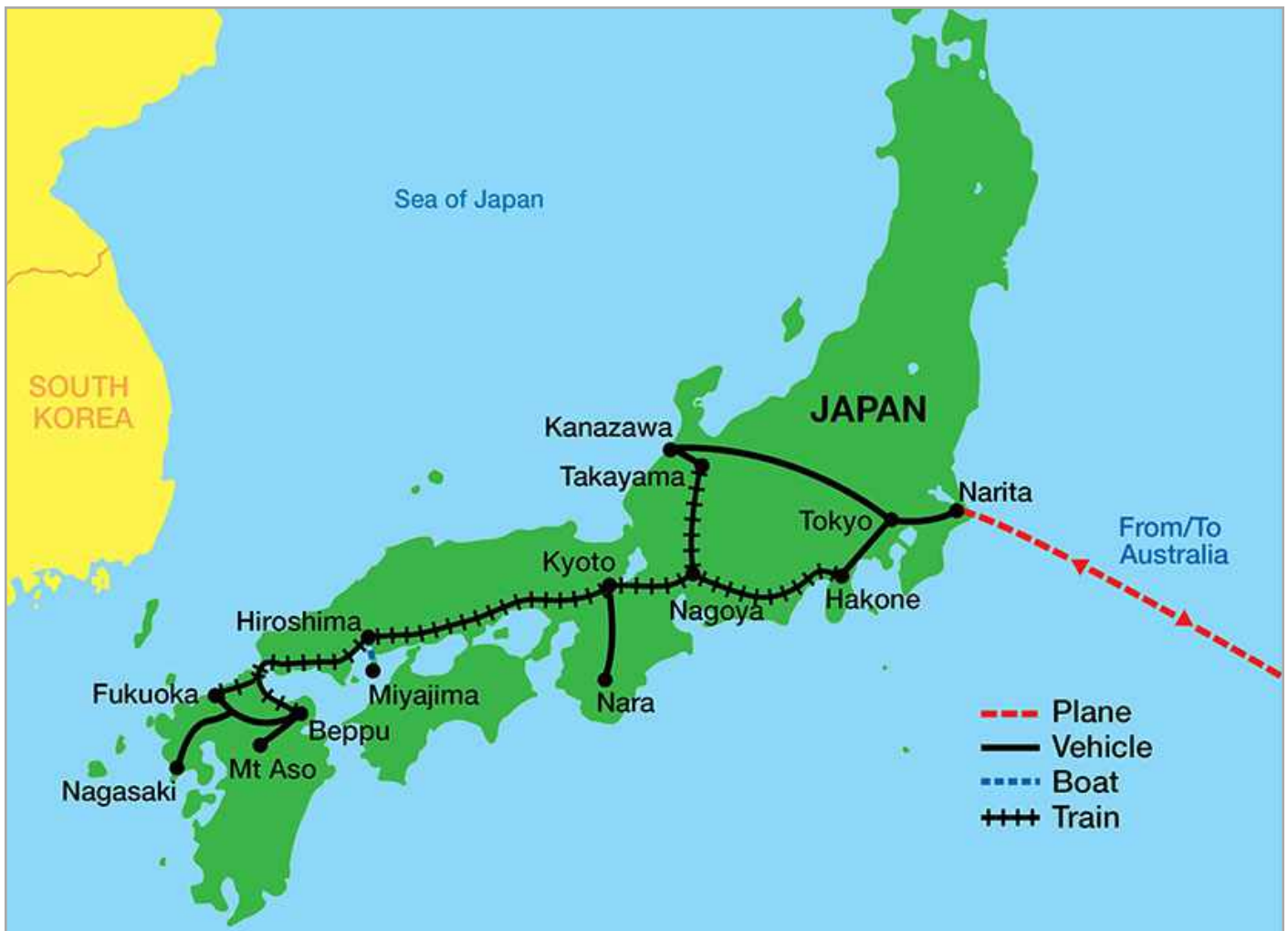
***COMBINE WITH OUR JAPAN'S NORTHERN HONSHU AND
SAVE \$1,000 PP ACROSS BOTH TOURS**

First time visitors are impressed by its green landscape and its mountains, which cover nearly three quarters of the country. The country, which is roughly the size of Germany consists of several thousands of islands, of which Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku are the four largest. Japan's rugged peaks, rocky coastlines, gorges, lakes, waterfalls and dense forests are breathtaking, but they put severe limits on liveable land. With seventy-five percent of the land unsuitable for habitation or cultivation the entire Japanese population of about 125,000,000 live in an area roughly the size of Tasmania. This makes Japan one of the most populated countries in the world in terms of people per square kilometre.

From the hi-tech speed and efficiency of the bullet train which will whisk you to Osaka, to the serenity of Kyoto's zen gardens and temples; Japan offers a unique mix of the modern and the traditional. This tour includes the best of everything Japan has to offer. It is designed for newcomers to Japan and follows a leisurely pace starting and ending in Tokyo.

Blue Dot's engaged style of travel means that we will give you every opportunity to meet Japanese people and to do as the Japanese do. The first thing you'll notice about the locals is how polite they are. The second thing you'll notice is that English is not commonly spoken or understood and as a result, there is a lot of bowing and smiling without many words being spoken. Practice your "Ohayōgozaimasu" (good morning) and "konichiwa" (good afternoon) as it will go a long way.

We'll start and finish in Tokyo giving you ample time to enjoy this modern metropolis, a city of pulsating energy. In between you'll have the chance to experience the many different aspects which make Japan such a unique and fascinating country — including some lesser travelled destinations.



**Day 1, Saturday 3rd September
IN TRANSIT**

The group will fly from Australia to either Haneda or Narita in Japan, depending on your carrier. *Meals in flight.*



**Day 2, Sunday 4th
September
ARRIVAL**

On arrival, the group will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel in Tokyo by private coach. After freshening up, take a tour of Ginza, Asakusa, and Hama

Rikyū Gardens, three popular destinations in Tokyo. Ginza is Japan's most famous upmarket shopping district, before stopping for lunch. Then we'll continue on to Asakusa for Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest and most famous Buddhist temple. From here, the group will take a boat along the Sumida River to the Hama Rikyū Garden, a beautiful landscaped garden located next to Tokyo bay. It is a peaceful oasis juxtaposed against the towering skyscrapers of Shiodome. Accommodation at the Shibuyu Tokyu Rei (or similar). *D*

**Day 3, Monday 5th September
HAKONE**

Today we will transfer from Tokyo to Hakone in a private coach. Firstly, we visit the excellent Open Air Museum, which houses an impressive array of international art and

sculpture, including over 300 works by Picasso alone. After visiting the museum, an opportunity to visit the Yosegi studio and its famous wooden puzzle boxes which are unique to this region. Our hotel for two nights is the Hakone Yunohana Prince Hotel (Ryokan style). The outdoor onsen baths are famous for breathtaking views over the Tokyo area as well as the starry sky. All the guest rooms are Japanese style with a traditional horigotatsu table built over a pit. A wonderful experience! *B/D*

**Day 4, Tuesday 6th
September
HAKONE**

After breakfast we will take a tour of the Hakone area. We will board the mountain train and cable car through the forested hills of the national park. Along this route, if the weather is kind, we will have spectacular views of Mount Fuji. On the shores of Lake Ashi, we will board the charmingly kitsch "pirate ship" which will take us across the lake to Hakone-machi. We'll stop for lunch (own cost) and then head to the impressive Hakone Shrine where the buildings are practically hidden amid the dense forest. We will head back to our ryokan in time for dinner. *B/D*





Day 5, Wednesday 7th September HAKONE - KYOTO

Today our luggage will be sent from Hakone to Kyoto and will be waiting for us at the hotel. We will transfer to Kyoto by bullet train, which is an experience in itself.

On arrival, we'll tour Kyoto by private coach visiting Kinkakuji and Ryoanji visiting two iconic sights - the stunning Golden Pavilion and Ryoanji Zen Garden. Late in the afternoon, we will arrive at our hotel the New Miyako, Kyoto (or similar). Conveniently located, the hotel is close to Kyoto Station, Kyoto Tower, Kiyomizu Temple, and Higashi Honganji Temple, as well as Toji Temple and Sanjusangendo Temple. We will stay for four nights. *B/L*

Day 6, Thursday 8th September KYOTO

Enjoy a buffet breakfast before heading out into central Kyoto for a day's sightseeing starting with Gion, the geisha district. From there, we'll head to Maruyama Park for the Yasaka Shrine, then stroll the colourful and lively back streets of Sannenzaka up to Kiyomizu Temple, which looks out over Kyoto from the hillside. Spend the afternoon at leisure, at your own pace, before returning to the hotel for dinner. *B/D*

Day 7, Friday 9th September DAY TRIP TO NARA

Today we take local trains to another ancient city; Nara. We'll visit the impressive giant bronze Buddha Japan's largest housed in the famous all-wood Tōdai-ji temple. Then enjoy a walk through Nara-kōen Park, which is home to very friendly local deer (who will follow you if they think you have food!). Return to the hotel in the afternoon with time to freshen up before dinner. *B/L*

Day 8, Saturday 10th September KYOTO

After breakfast, we'll spend the day exploring the delightful area of Arashiyama with its famous bamboo groves (makes for wonderful photos). Then we'll head to Jōjakkō-ji, a famous pagoda with excellent views of Kyoto. The Hozu River widens at Arashiyama, and it's well worth strolling beside the water and crossing over the famous bridge. Return to the hotel at the end of the day for dinner with the group. *B/D*

Day 9, Sunday 11th September KYOTO TO FUKUOKA

As before, our luggage will be sent ahead, arriving in Fukuoka the next day. We suggest packing a small overnight bag as you will be without the bulk of your luggage for an evening (take toiletries, medicines and a change of clothes). After arriving at Fukuoka, you will spend the rest of the day exploring Dazaifu, a quaint Japanese town close to Fukuoka. Spend time wandering its cobbled high street and be sure to try one of Dazaifu's famous treats Umegae Mochi, a sweet dumpling filled with red beans eaten hot off the grill. There are some lovely shrines and temples here too. Our guide will ensure that you don't miss Tenmangu Shrine, where students go to pray for good exam results, or Komyozenji temple with its beautiful Zen garden. Our hotel tonight for two nights is the Hotel Tokyu Rei Hakata (or similar) close to many of the city's core sights. *B/L*

Day 10, Monday 12th September DAY TRIP TO NAGASAKI

Today involves a day trip to Nagasaki by express train and local transport. We will explore some of Nagasaki's highlights. Glover garden is an attractive garden and open-air museum on the slope above the city, which has a stunning view over Nagasaki and its harbour. Time permitting we can stop off at Dejima, the former residence of Dutch traders, before visiting the incredibly moving Peace Park and Atomic Bomb museum, a sobering reminder of this historic event. Return to Fukuoka for dinner. *B/D*



Day 11, Tuesday 13th September FUKUOKA TO BEPPU



This morning our luggage will be sent ahead. The group will transfer to Beppu after breakfast. We'll visit the devil's (thermal) pools. The Sea Hell features a pond of boiling bright blue water. The Shaven Monk's Head Hell is a mud pool that bubbles up into shapes

resembling its name. Later you will move to your hotel, Beppuan Royal Hotel (or similar) where we stay for two nights. *B/D*

Day 12, Wednesday 14th September MT ASO AND OWATE FARM HOUSE

Today, we will drive through Kyushu's "Land of Fire" to Mount Aso, with spectacular views of the active volcano and massive caldera. Later, we have a great opportunity to visit an old farmhouse built in the 18th century, beautifully located in a rural area on a mountain plateau near the National Park in the volcanic mountains of Kyushu. *B/D*

Day 13, Thursday 15th September BEPPU TO HIROSHIMA

Our luggage will be sent from Beppu to Hiroshima overnight. We suggest packing a small overnight bag as you will be without the bulk of your luggage for an evening (toiletries, medicines and a change of clothes). After arriving at Hiroshima, the group will take a short tram ride to visit the Atomic Dome and Peace Park. It is a moving experience to see the museum exhibition and the thousands of "peace" origami cranes sent daily to the park. Our hotel for two nights is the Royal Park Hiroshima Riverside, within easy reach from the heart of the city. *B/L*



Day 14, Friday 16th September MIYAJIMA

Today we'll enjoy a wonderful day trip to the sacred island of Miyajima with our guide. We will see Itsukushima Shrine and its famous 'Floating' Torii Gate –

one of Japan's icons. We will also visit the gorgeous, 5 Tier Pagoda and Daisho-in Temple. Deer are traditionally believed to be messengers of the gods and wander the island freely. While technically wild, they are fond of any kind of treats - they will happily eat your rail pass, so please keep it tucked away safely while you're on the island! After returning to Hiroshima, we will go for a group dinner. *B/D*



**Day 15, Saturday
17th September
HIROSHIMA TO
TAKAYAMA VIA
NAGOYA**

Our luggage will be sent from Hiroshima to Takayama overnight. We suggest packing a small overnight bag

as you will be without the bulk of your luggage for an evening (toiletries, medicines and change of clothes). Your accommodation for two nights is at the Hotel Associa Takayama Resort (or similar). Set amidst the southwest of Takayama City in the highlands, this hotel soars 640 metres above sea level. All rooms command superb and unobstructed views of the northern Japanese Alps. Hotel Associa Takayama was the first hotel in Takayama to have its own hot spring bath. This is a truly lovely place to stay. *B/D*

**Day 16, Sunday 18th September
TAKAYAMA**

Today, an early start at the vibrant morning markets, which offer an interesting mix of crafts and produce for sale. The markets are a great place to sample the local foods, people-watch, and shop for souvenirs. From there, we'll head to Takayama Jinya, before visiting the San-machi Suji area of wooden merchant houses, many of which are now museums. The old town is full of sake breweries, which can be identified by the cedar balls hanging outside. We will explore the recently reconstructed buildings of what was one of Japan's largest castles. *B/D*



**Day 17, Monday
19th September
KANAZAWA VIA
SHIRAKAWAGO**

After breakfast, depart Takayama for Kanazawa via Shirakawago, by private coach. We will stop at the beautifully preserved area of

Shirakawa-gō, famous for steeply thatched gasshō-zukuri houses. This small village is different to any other place in Japan – the people go about their days in their own little, secluded world. At the end of the day, we will enjoy a group dinner in Kanazawa. Our hotel is the Daiwa Roynet Kanazawa Hotel (or similar). Located minutes from Kanazawa station, this hotel offers easy access to all the the sights of the city. *B/L*

**Day 18, Tuesday 20th September
KANAZAWA**

Today starts with Kenroku-en; one of Japan's most beautiful gardens and the Kanazawa Castle Park, where you can explore the recently reconstructed buildings of what was one of Japan's largest castles. Later, we'll visit the Higashi Chaya-gai district – one of Japan's best-preserved geisha districts with its old wooden buildings. You'll feel like you've stepped back a few hundred centuries! *B/D*

**Day 19, Wednesday 21st September
KANAZAWA TO TOKYO — OMOTESANDO AND
AOYAMA**

Our luggage will be sent from Kanazawa to Tokyo overnight (medicines and change of clothes required in your backpack).

Check in to the Tokyu Rei. After freshening up, we will take local trains to Omotesando and Aoyama area. Strolling through the trendy nearby districts of Harajuku, Omotesando, and Aoyama allows you to really get a taste of modern Tokyo. This evening you will enjoy a special private dinner with geisha entertainment. Geisha have long held a mysterious allure in the west but for the ordinary foreign traveller, getting access into Japan's hidden world is almost impossible without the right high level contacts. It's customary for dinners to be attended by one geiko, one apprentice maiko and a jikata or musician although this may vary, according to availability. Our guide will act as interpreter, allowing us to chat with the geisha and really get an insight into their fascinating lives. Tonight is the official farewell dinner where we can share our favourite memories with the group. *B/D*

**Day 20,
Thursday 22nd
September
TOKYO AT
LEISURE**

Today you will have the day at leisure in Tokyo to see places on your own wish list. Our guide will help you plan this



on the previous day. Suggestions include Yanesen, an area made up of the Yanaka, Nezu, and Sendagi neighbourhoods near Ueno, for the people expecting a slower more relaxed side of Tokyo. Strewn with small temples, craft shops, galleries and cafes, it's a great area to wander and make your own discoveries. If you're still feeling energetic, consider a trip to the Tokyo Skytree for some excellent views. The trendy Roppongi would be a good place for modern art connoisseur. Known as a party area, Roppongi lives a double life as an art hub. There's an impressive range of museums and smaller galleries. Consider the Mori Art Museum, which has fantastic views over the city as well as a great range of artwork, and the newly opened Complex 665 building, which is home to three separate galleries. The nearby National Art Centre Tokyo's impressive shimmering structure is one of the largest exhibition spaces in the country. With no permanent collection, there's always something new and exciting to see. Of course, another option is Ginza for the shopping enthusiasts. With fantastic architecture housing shops ranging from designer brands to affordable fashion chains and traditional craft shops, there is something for everyone here. *B*

**Day 21, Friday 23rd September
DEPARTURE**

Today, transfer to the airport for the journey home or, travel on to the next destination. We can assist with planning. *B*



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.