



Japan in Autumn

A land of striking beauty

Departs 7th September 2024

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different



Itinerary correct as at 1Jun 2024, but subject to change. ALL flights to be confirmed. www.bluedottravel.com.au



JAPAN IN AUTUMN

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 half the size of NSW and 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 the serenity of Kyoto's zen gardens and temples from Tokyo in less than three hours. 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 both newcomers and those who wish to re-visit 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. 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 7th September
IN TRANSIT**

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



**Day 2, Sunday 8th
September
ARRIVAL**

On arrival, the group will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel in Tokyo. After freshening up, we'll tour Ginza, Asakusa, and Hama Rikyū Gardens, three

popular destinations in Tokyo. Ginza is Japan's most famous upmarket shopping district before stopping for lunch. We'll continue 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 next to Tokyo Bay. It is a peaceful oasis juxtaposed against the towering skyscrapers of Shiodome. Our stay is at the Sunroute Plaza (or similar). *D*

**Day 3, Monday 9th September
HAKONE**

Today, we'll transfer from Tokyo to Hakone by train. Firstly, we'll visit the excellent Open Air Museum, which houses an impressive array of international art and sculpture, including over 300 works by Picasso alone. Tip: there's a great cafe for lunch at the museum (own cost). 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 Yumoto Tenseien (Ryokan style). This ryokan offers Hakone's most gorgeous scenery and hot springs. Tenseien adjoins a beautiful garden, home to two waterfalls and Tamadare Shrine, and is equipped with various baths, including a large open-air bath on the hotel's roof. A wonderful experience! *B/D*

**Day 4,
Tuesday 10th
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 (at 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 11th September HAKONE - KYOTO

Today our luggage will be sent from Hakone to Kyoto and will be waiting for us at our hotel. We will transfer to Kyoto by bullet train, which is an experience. On arrival, we'll tour Kyoto by public transport, visit Kinkakuji and Ryoanji, and visit two iconic sights - the stunning Golden Pavilion and Ryoanji Zen Garden. We will arrive at the Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo (or similar) late in the afternoon. 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 12th September KYOTO

Enjoy a buffet breakfast before heading into central Kyoto for sightseeing using local transport, starting at 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 13th 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, in the famous all-wood Tōdai-ji temple. Then enjoy a walk through Nara-kōen Park, 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 14th September KYOTO

After breakfast, we'll spend the day exploring the delightful area of Arashiyama with its famous bamboo groves (which make 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 15th 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, we'll spend the rest of the day exploring Dazaifu, a quaint Japanese town close to Fukuoka. Spend time wandering its cobbled high street and 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, which has its beautiful Zen garden. Tonight, our hotel for two nights is the Comfort Hotel Hakata (or similar), which is close to many of the city's sights. *B/L*



Day 10, Monday 16th 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 park 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 17th September FUKUOKA TO HIROSHIMA

Today, we'll take the fast train to Hiroshima. On arrival, the group will take a tram ride to 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 two-night hotel is the Granvia within easy reach from the city's heart. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. *B/L*



Day 12, Wednesday 18th 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 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 13, Thursday 19th 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 two-night accommodation 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 a hot spring bath. This is a truly lovely place to stay. *B/D*



Day 14 Friday 20th 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 one of Japan's largest castles. Later, we'll visit Higashi Chaya-gai district, one of Japan's best-preserved geisha districts with its old wooden buildings. You'll feel like you have stepped back centuries. *B/D*



Day 15, Saturday 21st September TAKAYAMA - 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 from any other place in Japan – the people spend 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 Hotel Intergate Kanazawa (or similar). Located minutes from Kanazawa station, this hotel offers easy access to all the city's sights. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. *B/L*



Day 16, Sunday 22nd September KANAZAWA

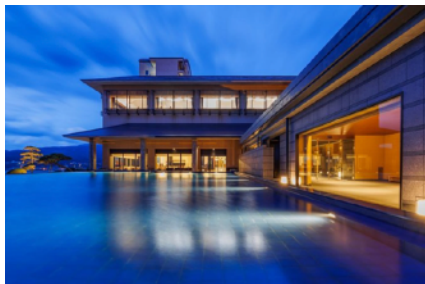
Today starts with Kenroku-en; one of Japan's most beautiful gardens and the Kanazawa Castle Park, where we can explore

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 abundant old wooden buildings. You'll feel you've stepped back in time a few centuries! *B/D*



Day 17 Monday 23rd September KANAZAWA - SADO ISLAND

We will spend most of today travelling to our next destination, Sado Island. Popular for its stunning natural scenery, green hills and cliffs dotted with strange-shaped rocks and small islands, Sado Island also has an interesting, though dark, history. Because of its relatively secluded location, the island was used as a place of political exile for elements showing a tendency to oppose the system in power. However, gold and



silver were discovered in the early Edo, and the island's significance changed dramatically. To get to the island, we will get the Shinkansen, which will take us to Niigata. We will have our lunch on board the train. From Niigata, we will take a jetfoil ferry to Sado Island. On arrival, we will board a coach to take us to our accommodation, the lovely Sado National Park Osado on the coast, where the sunset views are stunning. We will enjoy dinner in our ryokan. *B/L/D*



Day 18 Tuesday 24th September SADO ISLAND

After breakfast, we will go on a coach tour of the island. We will be taken to the Sado Taiko Centre for a taiko drumming experience in the morning. The world-famous Kodo taiko group, which debuted at the 1981 Berlin Festival, has its roots on Sado Island but received international acclaim for its creativity in exploring the limitless possibilities of taiko – traditional Japanese drums. We will have lunch at the centre before boarding the coach again and heading to Shukunegi Fishing village. A handful of traditional houses clustered around

an inlet of Sado's rugged coast, Shukunegi Port is one of the island's greatest charms. Formerly a shipbuilding centre, many quaint buildings are built from repurposed ship's timbers, and several can be visited. We'll return to our accommodation in time for dinner. *B/L/D*



Day 19 Wednesday 25th September SADO ISLAND - TOKYO

The group will spend most of today on Sado Island before returning to Tokyo later in the afternoon. Today's



coach tour of the island will take us to the Sado Gold Mine. This gold mine became the most productive mine in Japan and one of the most important sources of wealth for the Tokugawa shogun-ate. The working conditions were miserable, but in time, new methods and techniques were introduced from the West and the area became an exemplary place. The mine was in operation as recently as 1989. Now, though, it is open to local visitors rather than miners. Later, we will visit Toki Forest Park – Saving the Japanese Crested Ibis. The Toki Forest Park allows the public to learn about the history of crested ibis conservation and view the rare crested ibis up close. Several varieties of ibises are kept at the park, with a crested ibis family housed in a large, grassy enclosure being the main attraction. When the ibises feel brave, they will walk mere centimetres away from the windows of their enclosure, much to the delight of the visitors. We will have lunch before we take a scenic drive along the coast. The coach will take us to the port, where we will board the jetfoil ferry to Niigata on the mainland of Honshu. We will take the Shinkansen to Tokyo from Niigata to check in to our hotel, The Shinagawa Prince. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. *B/L*



Day 20 Thursday 26th September TOKYO

After breakfast, we will visit Meiji Jingu, Tokyo's largest shrine. The shrine is austere and built using cypress and copper. It is often busy with tourists and pilgrims and is still extremely popular for weddings, which are a treat to see. For lunch today, we will learn to make sushi and taste our creations. We will then head on to the nearby Omotesando area. A broad, straight street lined with an avenue of zelkova trees, Omotesando Dōri is where subculture meets high fashion. The area offers wonderful people-watching and a few architectural gems too. Before returning to our hotel, you'll have some free time before a special dinner with Geisha performance. *B/L/D*



Day 21 Friday 27th September DEPARTURE

After breakfast today, we will make our way to Narita Airport in time to catch our flight home (flight to be advised). Blue Dot will provide some sightseeing options (unguided and unhosted), subject to your flight departure time. *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.