



# Japan in Autumn

## A land of striking beauty

Departs 27th September 2026

**Blue Dot Travel**  
Go somewhere different



Itinerary correct as at 25 Sep 2024, but subject to change. ALL flights to be confirmed. [www.bluedottravel.com.au](http://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, Sunday 27th September IN TRANSIT

Depart Australia for your direct flight to Tokyo. On arrival in the evening, the group will be met at the airport and transferred to The Sunroute Plaza Shinjuku (or similar), where you will stay for two nights. *If you are interested in staying in Tokyo for an extra night or two, or arriving earlier to explore, please let us know and we can plan accordingly.*



### Day 2, Monday 28th

#### September GINZA, ASAKUSA AND HAMA RIKYU GARDENS

Meet your guide in reception after breakfast, and then

depart today on the local train at around 9.30 am for your day trip. (There's a mini supermarket across from the hotel if you want to grab water and any other essentials). Ginza is Japan's most famous upmarket shopping district and you'll see the main streets 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, a

beautiful, landscaped garden next to Tokyo Bay. It is a peaceful oasis juxtaposed against the towering skyscrapers of Shiodome. You'll take a local train back to your hotel, arriving late in the afternoon. *B/D*

### Day 3, Tuesday 29th September HAKONE

Today, we'll transfer from Tokyo to Hakone by train, noting that your luggage will be transferred separately to Kyoto and will not be with you for two nights. You'll need to pack a small

bag with all your essentials - toiletries, medicines and a change of clothes. (On arrival to Hakone, your smaller luggage can be transferred to the hotel so you won't



need to walk around for the rest of the day with it). 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, we'll head to our hotel by train and then the group will walk about 15-20 minutes to the Hakone Yumoto Tenseien (traditional ryokan style) for two nights. 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 (one for men and one for women) on the hotel's roof. Dinner is at a local restaurant. **B/D**

#### **Day 4, Wednesday 30th September** **HAKONE**

After breakfast, we will take a tour of the Hakone area. We'll walk to the station (15/20 minutes) and board the mountain train and cable car through the forested hills of the national park. If the weather is kind, we will have spectacular views of Mount Fuji. Then we'll take the Sky Gondola to the Hakone Volcano to view the past volcanic activity and visit the museum. Don't forget to try the famous black eggs, cooked for 60 minutes at 80 degrees in the springs. Then you'll descend back down the mountain to the shores of Lake Ashi, where you'll board the charmingly kitsch "pirate ship", across the lake to Hakone-machi. We'll stop for lunch after getting off the ship (there are about 5 or 6 good lunch options at your leisure) and then visit Hakone Sekisho, an important historical site in relation to transport and communication during the Edo period. You'll see how life was under the Shogun rule and have access to the museum on site. After this visit, we will head back to our ryokan by local bus (about 30 minutes) in time for a rest before dinner in the hotel (which is a fabulous buffet). **B/D**



#### **Day 5,** **Thursday 1st** **October** **HAKONE - KYOTO**

After breakfast we will transfer to Kyoto by bullet train (Shinkansen), which is an experience in itself. (Your luggage will be transferred to the local train station and you'll walk the 15/20 journey to the train). After about 15 minutes on the local train, you'll disembark at Odawara Station for the 2-hour journey on the Shinkansen to Kyoto. On arrival, we'll take our luggage to the hotel (just behind the train station) and leave it there until we check-in later in the afternoon. We'll head for lunch and then visit Kyoto and visit Kinkakuji and Ryoanji, and then visit two iconic sights of Kyoto - the stunning Golden Pavilion and Ryoanji Zen Garden. Our hotel - the Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo (or similar) is where we will stay for four nights. 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. Dinner is at your leisure tonight. *(Tip: at the Edo shopping centre – a 200 metre walk, there are many meal options. There are also many options at the train station and don't forget to check out the light show on the steps of the station's main area at night).* **B/L**

#### **Day 6, Friday 2nd October** **KYOTO**

Enjoy a buffet breakfast before meeting our guide in reception and heading into central Kyoto for sightseeing using a private minibus transfer, 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. Then, your bus will transfer you to Higashiyama district where you'll take a lovely stroll along the Philosophers Path and see the Nanzenji Temple. Return to the hotel for dinner late in the afternoon. **B/D**

#### **Day 7, Saturday 3rd October** **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). We'll stop for lunch and return to the hotel in the afternoon with time to freshen up before dinner (own cost). **B/L**

#### **Day 8, Sunday 4th October** **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. Then, the bus will take us to the Silver Pavilion and we'll walk the delightful Philosopher's path along the stream (a 30 - 40 minute meander). There are some lovely artisan shops and cafes along the walk. The bus will be at the other end to collect us. Return to the hotel at the end of the day for dinner with the group. **B/D**

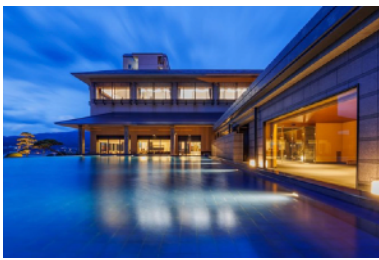
#### **Day 9, Monday 5th October** **KYOTO TO FUKUOKA**

As before, our luggage will be sent ahead, this time to Hiroshima so you'll be without it again for two nights. (Same packing as before). After arriving at Fukuoka, we'll transfer by local bus and spend a few hours exploring Dazaifu, a quaint Japanese town close to Fukuoka. Spend time wandering its 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. We'll have lunch before visiting 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. Dinner tonight is at your leisure and cost. **B/L**



### Day 10, Tuesday 6th October DAY TRIP TO NAGASAKI

Today involves a day trip to Nagasaki by express train and local transport - trams. We will explore some of Nagasaki's highlights. Glover Garden is an historic 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 Nagasaki Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum, a sobering reminder of this historic event. (Note the entrance is a 300 metre walk up hill). Return to Fukuoka for dinner near the river. After dinner, take a stroll along the river with all the neon lights and buskers. *B/D*



### Day 11, Wednesday 7th October FUKUOKA TO HIROSHIMA

Today, we'll take the fast train to Hiroshima. The group will take a tram ride to the

Hiroshima Atomic Dome and Peace Park on arrival. It is a moving experience to see the museum exhibition and the thousands of "peace" origami cranes sent daily to the park. Lunch today is included. Our two-night hotel is at the Daiwa Royalnet Hotel Ekimae, which is within easy reach of the city's heart. Your main luggage will be waiting for you on arrival. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. There are some great options on level two of your hotel or at the train station. *B/L*



### Day 12, Thursday 8th October 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! You'll grab some lunch at your leisure and we recommend trying oysters which are a local specialty. After returning to Hiroshima, there's be time for rest before heading out for a group dinner. *B/D*



### Day 13, Friday 9th October HIROSHIMA TO TAKAYAMA VIA NAGOYA

Today is predominantly a day of transfers. Our luggage will be sent from Hiroshima to Kanazawa. Again, you'll need to pack a small overnight bag for two nights. Your two-night accommodation is at the Hotel Associa Takayama Resort (or similar), and you'll be taking two trains. We suggest you grab lunch (a sandwich or traditional bento box at the station), before the train leaves. First, the Shinkansen JR (about 2 hours) and then you'll transfer at Nagoya for the local train to Takayama – also about 2 hours. Enjoy the stunning scenery of mountains and streams along the way. 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 was the first hotel in Takayama to have a hot spring bath. This is a truly lovely place to stay. *B/D*



### Day 14, Saturday 10th October TAKAYAMA

Today, we head to the 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, a historical landmark from the Edo period before visiting the Sanmachi 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. There are some lovely sights to see in the old town and you'll have time to gaze, shop and have lunch in one of the many restaurants. You'll also visit the Hida Takayama Museum of History and Art. *B/D*



### Day 15, Sunday 11th October 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 secluded world. Then, we'll transfer to a traditional restaurant for lunch – a few minute's drive from the village. Continue on to Kanazawa and check in to the Hotel Intergate (or similar). This hotel offers easy access to all the city's sights. Your main luggage will be waiting for you on arrival. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. There are quite a few options around your hotel. *B/L*



### Day 16, Monday 12th October KANAZAWA

Today starts with a visit to the Omicho market. Dating back to the Edo period, this is where the locals buy seafood. Stroll the undercover alleys and view some of the unusual seafood. Then, we'll take a local bus to 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, Tuesday 13th October KANAZAWA - SADO ISLAND

Today is mainly a day of transfers. We will spend most of today travelling to Sado Island. Once again, your luggage will be transferred separately, meaning you won't see it for two nights until we return to Tokyo. 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, Wednesday 14th October SADO ISLAND

Today's coach tour will take us to the newly listed UNESCO 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 shogunate. The working conditions were miserable, and it used slave labour at one time, but eventually, new methods and techniques were introduced from the West. 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 bird up close. Several varieties of ibises are kept at the park with the Crested Ibis being the main attraction. Sadly, the Japanese Crested Ibis became extinct, but recently, the same species from China has been successfully bred on Sado. We will have lunch 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 made of ship's timbers, and several can be visited **B/L/D**



### Day 19, Thursday 15th October SADO ISLAND - TOKYO

Today after breakfast, we will head 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. However, it 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 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, where your luggage will be waiting for you. You'll arrive about 7.45 pm. Dinner tonight is at your leisure. We suggest you grab a Bento Box or similar at Niigata station before boarding the Shinkansen. Note there is one train change when you arrive in Tokyo. **B/L**



### Day 20, Friday 16th October TOKYO

After breakfast, we will visit Meiji Jingu, Tokyo's largest shrine. The shrine is austere and was 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 the culinary art of sushi making and have a chance to sample our creations. We then head 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. Before returning to our hotel, you'll have free time before a special farewell dinner and Geisha performance. **B/L/D**

### Day 21, Saturday 17th October DEPARTURE

This morning (very early), those of us on the group flight QF026 will make our way to Haneda Airport to catch our flight home. (Your tour leader will confirm the departure time from the hotel). If you stay in Tokyo for an extra night or two, you'll make your way to the airport by taxi, which the hotel can arrange for you (cost is approximately \$50 AUD). Your journey through Japan has come to an end. We hope you enjoyed this beautiful country! **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.