



Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different



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 IN TRANSIT

Depart Australia for your direct flight to Tokyo's Haneda Airport. On arrival in the evening, the group will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel, where we 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 GINZA, ASAKUSA AND HAMA RIKYU GARDENS

Meet your tour leader in the morning for a "house-keeping" brief and then meet your guide in reception after breakfast. Depart on the local train at around 9.30 am for your day trip. (Tip: There's a mini supermarket on most street corners 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 Hama Rikyu, a beautiful, landscaped garden located 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 HAKONE

Today, we'll take the train from Tokyo to Hakone, noting that your luggage will be transferred separately to Kyoto and will not be with you for the next two nights. You'll need to pack a small bag with all your essentials—toiletries, medicines, and a change of clothes. On arrival at Hakone, your smaller luggage can be transferred to the hotel, so you won't need to walk around with it for the rest of the day. 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, where we'll stay 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 HAKONE

After breakfast, we will take a tour of the Hakone area. We'll walk to the station 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 disembarking from the ship (there are approximately 5 or 6 good lunch options available at your leisure) and then visit Hakone Sekisho, a significant historical site related to transportation and communication during the Edo period. You'll experience life under the Shogun rule and have access to the on-site museum. After this visit, we will head back to our accommodation in time for a rest before dinner in the hotel **B/D**



Day 5 HAKONE - KYOTO

After breakfast, we'll transfer to Kyoto by bullet train (Shinkansen), which is an experience in itself. After 15 minutes on

the local train, we'll disembark at Odawara Station for the 2-hour journey on the Shinkansen to Kyoto. On arrival, collect our luggage and head to the hotel (just behind the train station). We'll leave our luggage there (check-in will be later in the afternoon). We'll head for lunch and then visit Kyoto and Kinkakuji and Ryoanji, and then see 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 eating 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 KYOTO

After breakfast, we'll meet our guide and head into central Kyoto for sightseeing with a private minibus transfer, starting in Gion, the geisha district. From there, 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. Return to the hotel for dinner late in the afternoon. **B/D**

Day 7 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 (at your own cost). **B/L**

Day 8 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 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 a beautiful Zen Garden. Tonight, our hotel for two nights is close to many of the city's sights and restaurants. Dinner tonight is at your leisure and cost. **B/L**

Day 10 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 a scenic park and open-air museum on the slope above the city, offering stunning views of Nagasaki and the 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 uphill). 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 FUKUOKA TO HIROSHIMA

Today, we'll take the fast train to Hiroshima. Upon arrival, the group will take a tram ride to the Hiroshima 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. Lunch today is included. Our two-night hotel 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. **B/L**

Day 12 MIYAJIMA

Today, we'll enjoy a wonderful day trip to the sacred island of Miyajima, accompanied by 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 are allowed to 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 will be time for rest before heading out for a group dinner. **B/D**



Day 13 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 stay in Takayama is for two nights, and you'll be taking two trains to get there. We suggest grabbing lunch (a sandwich or traditional bento box) at the station before the train leaves. First, take the Shinkansen JR (approximately 2 hours), and then transfer at Nagoya for the local train to Takayama – also approximately 2 hours. Enjoy the stunning scenery of mountains and streams along the way. **B/D**

Day 14, Saturday 31st 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 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. 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 TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA VIA SHIRAKAWAGO

After breakfast, depart from 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 unlike any other place in Japan – the people spend their days in a secluded world. Then, we'll transfer to a traditional restaurant for lunch, a few minutes' drive from the village. Continue to Kanazawa and check into

your hotel, which 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 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, featuring numerous old wooden buildings. You'll feel you've stepped back in time a few centuries! Your luggage will be forwarded to Tokyo. **B/D**



Day 17 KANAZAWA - TOKYO

Today is mainly a day of transfers. We will spend most of the day travelling back to Tokyo on the Shinkansen. Enjoy the countryside as you travel at speeds of up to 300 km/h. On our return to Tokyo, we'll check into our hotel for the final two nights. Dinner is at a local restaurant. **B/D**

Day 18 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 remains extremely popular for weddings, which are a treat to witness. For lunch today, we will learn the culinary art of sushi-making and have the opportunity 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 a Geisha performance. **B/L/D**

Day 19 TOKYO - 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.