

Japan in Autumn

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

October 2027 | 19 Days

\$17,600 per person, twin share

Solo Supplement: \$4,000

Tour Highlights

- The politeness and hospitality of the locals
- The varied food as you travel from region to region
- The country's landscapes and gardens
- Hakone's outdoor sculpture museum
- Taking the Shinkansen (bullet train)
- The unique township of Shirakawago
- Kyoto and her temples
- Hiroshima and Miyajima Island with its famous Torii gate
- The ultra-busy Tokyo – the world's third largest city



Japan in Autumn



Tour overview

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.

Activity rating: Moderate



You must be capable of: walking up to 8,000 steps daily; occasionally ascending 3-4 flights of steps; standing at attractions for 1-2 hours; boarding and disembarking transport unaided and handling your own luggage.

Day 1, Saturday 16th October ARRIVE TOKYO

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 the hotel, where we 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.

Overnight: Tokyo



Day 2, Sunday 17th October GINZA, ASAKUSA AND HAMA RIKYU GARDENS

After breakfast, we'll meet our tour leader for a "house-keeping" briefing session, before meeting our local guide, Miyu. We'll depart for Ginza on the local train at around 9.30 am. 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. Overnight: Tokyo **B/D**

Day 3, Monday 18th October HAKONE

Today, we'll take the train from Tokyo to Hakone. Please note that your luggage will be transferred separately to Kyoto and will not accompany you for the next two nights. You'll need to pack a small bag with all your essentials: toiletries, medications, 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 is adjacent to a beautiful garden home to two waterfalls and the Tamadare Shrine, and features 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. Overnight: Hakone **B/D**



Day 4, Tuesday 19th October 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 Hakone Volcano to view its 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 the ship (there are approximately 5 or 6 good lunch options available at your leisure), 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 return to our accommodation in time for a rest before dinner at the hotel. Overnight Hakone **B/D**



Day 5, Wednesday 20th October 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 in Kyoto is conveniently located close to Kyoto Tower, Kiyomizu Temple, Higashi Honganji Temple, 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. Overnight: Kyoto **B/L**



Day 6, Thursday 21st October 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. Overnight: Kyoto **B/D**



Day 7, Friday 22nd October DRAY 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). Overnight: Kyoto **B/L**



Day 8, Saturday 23rd October KYOTO

After breakfast, we'll spend the day exploring the delightful area of Arashiyama, home to its famous bamboo groves, which make for wonderful photos. Then we'll head to Jōjakko-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 pick us up. Return to the hotel for dinner with the group. Overnight: Kyoto **B/D**



Day 9, Sunday 24th 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 notable shrines and temples here as well. We'll have lunch before visiting either Tenmangu Shrine, where students pray for good exam results, or Komyozenji Temple, which has a beautiful Zen Garden. Our accommodation is close to many of the city's sights and restaurants. Dinner tonight is at your own leisure. Overnight: Fukuoka **B/L**



Day 10, Monday 25th October DAY TRIP TO NAGASAKI

Today involves a day trip to Nagasaki by express train, local buses, and 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. Overnight: Fukuoka **B/D**



Day 11, Tuesday 26th October 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. Overnight: Hiroshima **B/L**



Day 12, Wednesday 27th October 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 freely across the island. 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 lunch at your leisure, and we recommend trying oysters, a local specialty. After returning to Hiroshima, there will be time for rest before heading out for a group dinner. Overnight: Hiroshima **B/D**



Day 13, Thursday 28th 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 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. Overnight: Takayama **B/D**



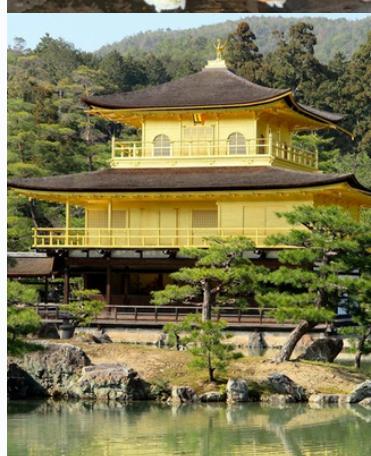
Day 14, Friday 29th October TAKAYAMA

Today, we head to the morning markets, where an eclectic mix of crafts and produce awaits. 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, 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 local Museum of History and Art. Overnight: Takayama **B/D**



Day 15, Saturday 30th October 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. Next, to a traditional restaurant for lunch, a few minutes' drive from the village. Continue to Kanazawa and check into a hotel with easy access to the city's sights. Your main luggage will be waiting for you upon arrival. Dinner tonight is at your own leisure, with plenty of options around the hotel. Overnight: Kanazawa **B/L**



Day 16, Sunday 31st 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, featuring numerous old wooden buildings. You'll feel you've stepped back in time a few centuries! Your luggage will be forwarded to Tokyo. Overnight: Kanazawa **B/D**



Day 17, Monday 1st November 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. Overnight: Tokyo **B/D**

Day 18, Tuesday 2nd November TOKYO

After breakfast, we will visit Meiji Jingu, Tokyo's largest shrine. The shrine is austere, built of 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 art of sushi-making and 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. This evening, a special farewell dinner and a performance. Overnight: Tokyo **B/L/D**

Day 19, Wednesday 3rd November TOKYO - DEPARTURE

This morning (very early), those of us on the group flight will head to Haneda Airport to catch our flight home. If you stay in Tokyo for an extra night or two, you can take a taxi to the airport, which the hotel can arrange (approximately \$50 AUD). Your journey through Japan has come to an end. **B**



Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are some of the hotels on this tour.

Final hotels may change, and a complete list will be shared with you.

The Blossom Hibuya, Tokyo
www.jrk-hotels.co.jp/en/Hibuya

The Blossom Hakata, Fukuoka
www.jrk-hotels.co.jp/en/fukuoka

Tokyu Stay Hida, Takayama
www.tokyustay.co.jp/en/

Crowne Plaza, Kanazawa
www.ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels

Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is safe, inclusive and enjoyable. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A \$500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

For more information:

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