SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Central Japan Self Guided

11 Days/10 Nights

Central Japan Self Guided

Tour Overview

Between the imperial city of Kyoto, and the shogun’s city of Tokyo, lies Central Japan. This area of Japan epitomizes the extremes and contradictions of Japan today. The densely populated coastal belt city of Tokyo is a stark contrast with the beautiful natural scenery of the mountainous central area. Though readily accessible, central Japan is still remote enough to have retained traditional lifestyles and architecture.

📍 Destinations

Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Takayama, Shirakawa-go, Kanazawa, Kyoto

📄Tour Details

Central Japan is a slow-paced region that has it all, without the crowds. You will experience the huge megalopolis of Tokyo where the sheer energy level of the city will sweep you away. The quaint town of Takayama invites exploration with its farmers markets and Sanmachi-suji district, consisting of merchant homes dating back to the 16th century. The old farmhouses at Shirakawa-go will give you a glimpse of the way of life in 17th-century rural Japan, and Kanazawa has one of Japan’s best gardens. You will also have the opportunity to explore the ancient shrines and

temples of Kyoto, and exquisite cultural experiences.

Tour Highlights	✔ Shirakawago - A UNESCO World Heritage Site ✔ Kanazawa ✔ Kyoto ✔ Two separate rides on a Shinkansen (bullet train)
Tour Inclusions	✔ Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities ✔ Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging ✔ English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan ✔ 7 Day JR Rail Pass ✔ Meeting service at the arrival airport ✔ SUICA Card pre-loaded with 2,500 yen for the subways in Tokyo and Kyoto and for trains to Kamakura and Hakone ✔ 2 day Hakone Free passes allowing unlimited travel around Hakone ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
Tour Exclusions	✖ Airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map

Tour Destinations

Tokyo
Kamakura
Hakone
Takayama
Shirakawago
Kanazawa
Kyoto

🚌Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

You will be welcomed at Tokyo's Narita Airport by a Samurai Tours representative who will help you with your rail pass exchange, obtain your limousine bus ticket into Tokyo, and assist with boarding the bus to your hotel in Tokyo. No meals included.

Travel: 1-1/2 Hours

Day 2 Tokyo – Tokyo Tower, Ginza, Asakusa

After breakfast, the licensed, English-speaking guide will meet you in the lobby of your accommodations. The guided tour will start with traveling to Tokyo Tower. The Tokyo Tower is a communications and observation tower in the center of Tokyo. At 332.9 metres (1,092 ft), it is the second-tallest structure in Japan. The structure is an Eiffel Tower-inspired lattice tower, with a main observatory at 150 meters that is reached via elevator or a 600-step staircase. Thanks to the tower's central location, the observatory offers an interesting view of the city despite being only at a relatively moderate height. Afterwards, we will travel to the famous Ginza district, the most expensive real estate in the world. Ginza is recognized by many as one of the most luxurious shopping districts in the world, attracting visitors and regulars alike from across the globe. Before continuing we will stop for a lunch of Kushiage (fried meat and vegetables on bamboo skewers). Next, we will travel to the nearby Asakusa area where we will tour the Nakamise-dori, Senso-ji Buddhist Temple, and the Asakusa Shrine where you will learn about Buddhist and Shinto Japanese religious practices. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 3 Tokyo

Today is free to explore Tokyo. We recommend starting the day by traveling to Tsukiji Market, the world's largest fish market. It is estimated that 20% of all the fish caught in the world pass through this market. There are two parts to the Tsukiji Market- the inner market and the outer market. The inner market is for wholesale business and the outer market is for retail. There are so many more exciting places to visit in Tokyo. You may want to go shopping for that perfect souvenir, visit the Meiji Shrine dedicated to the Japanese emperor of the 19th century, or wander through the trendy Shibuya or Harajuku districts where you will more than likely see interesting and far-out fashions. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 4 Travel to Kamakura; Tour Kamakura; Travel to Hakone

Before checking out, you will transfer your main luggage to Takayama, and will be traveling to Hakone and Takayama with overnight bags only. You will travel by local trains to the ancient city of Kamakura, the former capital of Japan in the 13th century. You can visit Hase-dera temple, originally established in the 8th century which houses a famous Kannon statue made from wood and gold leaf, and also has a commanding view of the nearby ocean. Next you can visit Kotokuin, the home of the famous Kamakura Great Buddha. This 40-foot tall bronze statue of Buddha, built in the 13th century is an icon of Japan. Later in the afternoon, you will travel by local trains to Hakone Yumoto onsen. Here you can rest and relax the in thermally-heated mineral waters of the bath at the ryokan. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours

Day 5 Tour Hakone; Travel to Takayama

After checking out, you will tour the Hakone area. Hakone is famous for its natural beauty and the view of nearby Mt. Fuji (weather permitting). Be sure to stop at the Owakudani. Owakudani offers magnificent views of Mount Fuji in what is still an active volcanic region. Here at Owakudani, you will have free time to explore the thermally-heated pools and mud pots. You can try one of the “black eggs” which are eggs hard-boiled in the thermally-heated mineral waters. It is said that if you eat one of these eggs it will add seven years to your life (it is probably said by the people who sell the eggs). Late in the afternoon, you will travel by local train, bullet train and express train to Takayama. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. After checking in you can enjoy dinner at one of the many restaurants specializing in Hida Beef. Hida Beef is the same thing as the more famous Kobe Beef. You will retrieve your main luggage from your hotel in Takayama. Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 5 Hours

Day 6 Tour Takayama

We recommend starting the morning at the farmers market strolling past the vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs, sampling the numerous options as you go. In the afternoon, the choices for what to do are abundant. You can explore the Takayama Jinya, visit the many temples, see numerous shrines and museums, rummage through antique shops, or relax at one of sake breweries. You may also take the bus to the Hida-no-Sato Open Air Museum with its traditional, thatched-roof homes from the surrounding area, or visit the Yatai Kaikan, a museum chronicling the famous festival held every April and October in Takayama. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 7 Takayama, Shirakawa-go, Kanazawa

After breakfast, you will take a highway bus to the valley of Shirakawa-go. Shirakawa-go is the home of many Gassho-zukuri (Praying Hand) style homes, which have been moved here from the surrounding area. These homes were first used as far back as the 18th century and are still being used today. You can tour the open-air museum where you can explore 25 of these traditional farmhouses, or just enjoy the small village atmosphere of Shirakawa-go. In the afternoon you will take another bus to the city of Kanazawa. Kanazawa, located on the northern coast of Japan, was once controlled by one of the wealthiest families in Japan, the Maeda Clan. They were admirers and sponsors of many traditional arts, and these arts flourished under their sponsorship. Many of these arts are still being practiced today in Kanazawa. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 3 Hours

Day 8 Tour Kanazawa, Travel to Kyoto

We recommend starting the day by touring the Kenrokuen Garden. This garden is considered to be one of the three best gardens in Japan and was initially constructed in the 17th century. After enjoying the garden, you can tour the Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum to learn how the local Kanazawa handicrafts are made. We also suggest visiting the Kutani Pottery Kiln, where you can watch artisans making the local Kutani pottery, or the Naga-machi District which was the former living quarters of the samurai that served the local warlord in Kanazawa as far back as the 17th

century. You may want to visit the Saihitsuan Yuzen Silk Center where you can observe demonstrations of Yuzen silk painting, a centuries-old technique used for decorating kimonos, or visit the Higashi-no-Kuruwa pleasure quarter, an active geisha district. Later in the afternoon you will travel by train to Kyoto. Steeped in history and tradition, Kyoto has in many ways been the cradle of Japanese culture. A stroll through Kyoto today is a walk through 11 centuries of Japanese history. Kyoto is endowed with an almost overwhelming legacy of ancient Buddhist temples, majestic palaces, and gardens of every size and description. For many, just the name of Kyoto conjures up the classic images of Japan: streets of traditional wooden houses, the click-clack of geta (wooden sandals) on the paved stones, geisha in a flourish of brightly colored silks, and a tea master warming water and making tea. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 2 Hours

Day 9 Tour Kyoto

Today is free to explore Kyoto on your own. Steeped in history and tradition, Kyoto has in many ways been the cradle of Japanese culture. Here you can visit Kinkaku-ji. Kinkaku-ji, also known as the Golden Pavilion, is one of Kyoto's, as well as Japan's, most recognizable attractions. The gleaming building covered in gold leaf seems to float on the aptly named Mirror Pond, especially on a sunny day. If you would like, visit Nijo Castle next. Built in 1603, it was the Kyoto home of Tokugawa Ieayasu, the first Tokugawa Shogun. The ostentatious style of construction was intended as a demonstration of Ieyasu's prestige, and to signal the demise of the emperor's power. The finest artists of the day filled the castle with delicate transom woodcarvings and paintings by the Kano School on sliding doors. One of the castle's most intriguing features is the so-called "nightingale" floors. To protect the Shogun from real or imagined enemies, these floorboards creak when stepped on. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 10 Tour Kyoto

Today we suggest you travel by train to the nearby city of Fushimi, one of the largest sake producing regions of Japan. Here you can visit the Fushimi Inari shrine. This Shinto Shrine, established in the 8th century, is famous for the long tunnels of vermilion torii gates straddling a network of trails leading to the top of the heavily forested Mt. Inari. Next, you can visit the famous Kiyomizu-dera temple. Kiyomizu-dera literally translates to "Pure Water Temple". For centuries, visitors and pilgrims have climbed the hill to the temple standing on a steep hillside with fine views of the city of Kyoto. Supported by 139 pillars, the temple juts out over the valley. Finding the courage to set out on a daring, new adventure is likened to "taking a leap from the veranda of Kiyomizu". From Kiyomizu, you can walk through the Higashiyama District of Kyoto. This area of narrow, cobblestone alleys with its numerous shops and restaurants is truly enjoyable and relaxing. Next, walk to the famous Gion Geisha District. Here, you will see where the Geisha live and work. You may even see one on their way to one of their appointments. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: N/A

Day 11 Return Home

It's time to say "sayonara" (goodbye) to Japan. You will take the express train to the Kansai International Airport (Osaka), or return to Narita Airport (Tokyo) by Shinkansen and express train for your flight back home (if you are flying out of Narita Airport, be sure to schedule a flight after 15:00). Breakfast at the hotel is included.

Travel: 4 Hours

Dates & Pricing

Low Season-
¥404,763 (per person, based on double occupancy)
January 6-February 28
June 16-August 5
August 18-August 31
November 16-December 24

Regular Season-
¥438,404 (per person, based on double occupancy)
March 1-March 14
May 7-June 15
September 1-October 14

Peak Season-
¥472,198 (per person, based on double occupancy)
March 15-May 6 (Cherry Blossom & Golden Week)
August 6- August 17 (Obon Holiday)
October 15- November 15 (Fall Foliage)
December 25-January 5 (New Years)

Adjustments for 2020 Tours

There will be an additional 5% charge for 2020 tours

The following dates will also be peak season due to the 2020 Olympics

July 10th – Aug 23rd

Inclusions

- Accommodations in 3 Star hotels including all taxes, fees and breakfast every morning (contact us about accommodation upgrades)
    - Tokyo: Western-style hotel such as Shinagawa Prince Hotel
    - Hakone Yumoto Onsen: Japanese-style ryokan such as Hakone Tenseien
    - Takayama: Western-style hotel such as Takayama Ouan
    - Kanazawa: Western-style hotel such as Dormy Inn Kanazawa
    - Kyoto: Western-style hotel such as Dormy Inn Kyoto

- Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities
- Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging
- 7 Day Ordinary Car JR Rail Pass
- English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan
- Meeting service at the airport (only available for arrivals at Narita Airport)
- Airport transfers
- 8 Hours with a licensed, English-speaking guide
- Suggested train schedules including train schedules for 2 hours prior and 2 hours after the suggested time to allow you to choose your own times
- SUICA Card pre-loaded with 2,500 yen for the subways in Tokyo and Kyoto and for trains to Kamakura and Hakone
- Breakfast every day
- 2 day Hakone Free passes allowing unlimited travel around Hakone
- Nohi Bus Tickets for your travel to Shirakawa-go and Kanazawa
- Electronic version of itinerary
- A copy of our “Gaijin on Getas” tour handbook (this is the same popular handbook our escorted tour members receive) which contains 180 pages of Japan travel tips, Japanese language tips, Japanese customs and etiquette and Japanese history to prepare you properly for your trip and allow you to enjoy Japan even more after you arrive
- Baggage transfer forms (we will provide the necessary forms in Japanese to transfer your main baggage ahead, allowing you the freedom of traveling light. The service provided will only work overnight, so you will need to travel with an overnight bag. The actual transfer fees are not included and will be paid by you at the time of transfer. These fees normally run between 1,250 Yen and 2,500 Yen)

What’s Not Included

- All airfare
- Local transportation (subways, buses, taxis, etc.)
- All admission fees
- Lunches and dinners (except where noted)
- Desserts at any included meals (except where noted)
- Drinks other than water and tea at any included meals (except where noted)
- A printed itinerary is not included

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