



SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Japan Alps Winter Self Guided



8 Days/7 Nights

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Tour Overview

Outdoor hot spring onsens, warm sake, snow-covered mountain peaks, and quaint mountain villages make the Japan Alps the place to be for a winter getaway. Add the unique outdoor activities only possible in the winter, and you have a travel experience that will create lifelong memories.

Destinations

*Tokyo, Matsumoto, Hirayu/Okuhida, Takayama, Shirakawago, Kanazawa, Yudanaka/Shibu
Onsens, Snow Monkey Park*

Tour Details

The Japan Alps is a slow-paced region that has it all, without the crowds. Though readily accessible, the Japan Alps are still remote enough to have retained traditional lifestyles and architecture. When you add the unique opportunities that only Japan winters offer with the small crowds, the result is an unforgettable travel experience. The castle town of Matsumoto with its striking “Crow Castle” is sure to please, along with numerous 17th-century warehouses. The quaint town of Takayama with its sake breweries invites exploration. The old farmhouses at

Shirakawa-go will give you a glimpse of the way of life in 17th-century rural Japan. Visit the famous Japanese Snow Monkeys as they bathe in the outdoor baths, and enjoy some of the best outdoor baths in Japan while visiting Hirayu Onsen.

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Visit the Kumano Sanzan (all three of the Kumano Kodo shrines)
- ✓ Walk along the Nakahechi Pilgrimage Trail from Hosshinmonoji to Hongu Taisha
- ✓ Kawabune Boat Cruise
- ✓ Walk along the Daimonzaka to Nachi Taisha

Tour Inclusions

- ✓ Reserved Seat Tickets on the trains to and from Kyoto
- ✓ Meeting service at the arrival airport
- ✓ Baggage transfer from city to city
- ✓ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
- ✓ 8 Hours with a guide
- ✓ Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities and locations
- ✓ Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging
- ✓ English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan

Tour Exclusions

- ✗ International airfare is NOT included.
- ✗ A printed itinerary is not included
- ✗ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

 **Map**



Tour Destinations

-  Tokyo
-  Matsumoto
-  Hirayu Onsen
-  Shin Hotaka
-  Takayama
-  Shirakawago
-  Kanazawa
-  Nagano
-  Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

You will travel on your own to Tokyo, and check into the hotel. No meals are included.

Travel: TBD

Day 2 Travel to Matsumoto; Tour Matsumoto Castle; Travel to Hirayu Onsen

After breakfast you will travel by Shinkansen and express train to Matsumoto. From the moment you step off the train and hear the announcement “Matsumotooooo” you will recognize that you are some place special. We would suggest first visiting the famous Matsumoto Castle. This beautiful castle is also known as Crow Castle because of its stark black walls. The castle was first built in 1504 and remodeled into its current form at the turn of the 17th century. From the top of the main tower you will have a wonderful view of the city and the surrounding mountains. After touring Matsumoto Castle you will travel to the town of Hirayu in Okuhida. Okuhida is famous for its hot springs, and especially for its rotemburo (outdoor baths) with views of the surrounding Northern Japan Alps. Hirayu is the oldest and largest of Okuhida’s onsen towns, and is said to have been discovered in the 1560s by Takeda Shingen. You will have the opportunity to enjoy the onsens after checking into the ryokan.

Travel: 4 1/2 Hours

Day 3 Free Day at Hirayu Onsen

Today is a free day to explore Hirayu and the Okuhida region. You can take this day to go skiing, take a snowshoe tour, or venture up the Shin-Hotaka Ropeway. The Shin-Hotaka Ropeway is one of Japan’s most unique ropeways with one of the largest elevation gains in the country (over 1,000 meters). It climbs up the side of the Hotaka Mountain Range, which includes Oku-Hotakedake, Japan’s third highest peak. The ropeway’s most distinguishing feature is its double decker gondola cars, the first of their kind in Japan, which offer excellent views of the Okuhida Region.

Travel: N/A

Day 4 Travel to Takayama; Tour Takayama

After breakfast at the ryokan you will travel to the nearby town of Takayama. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. We recommend starting your visit to Takayama by strolling through the farmer’s markets as you sample the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. Next, you can tour the Takayama-jinya which has been the governing office of Takayama and the surrounding area since the early 17th century. Later, you can visit the Sanmachi-suji district consisting of merchant homes dating back to the 16th century, visit the many temples, shrines and museums, rummage through antique shops, or relax at one of the sake breweries.

Travel: 1 Hour

Day 5 Travel to Shirakawago; Tour Shirakawago; Travel to Kanazawa

After breakfast you will take a public 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 long ago as the 18th century and are still being used today. They are built to withstand the tremendous amounts of snow this area of Japan receives. You will stop for a short time to explore some of these traditional farmhouses. You will then catch another public 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.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours

Day 6 Tour Kanazawa; Travel to Yudanaka Onsen

After breakfast we suggest 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 we will tour the Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum to learn how the local Kanazawa handicrafts are made. Later on we recommend touring the Naga-machi Samurai District. This area of Kanazawa, located at the foot of Kanazawa Castle, was the residential district for the samurai serving the castle. The area preserves a historic atmosphere with its remaining samurai residences, earthen walls, private entrance gates, narrow lanes, and water canals. You can also visit the Nomura House where the Nomura family, a high-ranking retainer for the Maeda family, resided. After touring Kanazawa you will travel to Yudanaka Onsen where you will spend the night.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours

Day 7 Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park; Travel to Tokyo

After breakfast you will travel to the Snow Monkey Park. Here, at the Jigoku-dani (Hell Valley), you will delight in the world famous “snow monkeys” of Japan. The Red-Faced “snow monkeys” are only found in Japan, and enjoy using the thermally-heated mineral water baths all year long. After visiting the snow monkeys you will return to Tokyo by express train and Shinkansen.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours

Day 8 Sayonara

It's time to say goodbye. You will find your own way to the airport or to your next destination.

Travel: TBD Hours

Dates & Pricing

Low Season-

¥315,309 (per person, based on double occupancy)

January 6 - February 28

June 16 - August 5

August 18 - August 31

November 16 - December 24

Regular Season-

¥341,457 (per person, based on double occupancy)

March 1 - March 14

May 7 - June 15

September 1 - October 14

Peak Season-

¥366,841 (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 regarding accommodation upgrades)
 - Tokyo: Western-style hotel such as Shinagawa Prince Hotel
 - Hirayu Onsen: Japanese-style ryokan such as Hirayukan
 - Takayama: Western-style hotel such as Takayama Ouan
 - Kanazawa: Western-style hotel such as Dormy Inn Kanazawa
 - Yudanaka: Japanese-style ryokan such as Hotel Shirogane
- 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
- Train tickets to and from Nagano and Yudanaka
- Nohi bus tickets on the following segments:
 - Matsumoto to Hirayu
 - Hirayu to Takayama
 - Takayama to Shirakawago
 - Shirakawago to Kanazawa
- Airport transfers
- 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
- Breakfast every day
- 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 1,750 Yen)

What's Not Included

- Airfare is not included
- 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

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at www.samuraitours.com/tours for the most current dates, prices and information.

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