

**Japanese Heartland
12 days – 11 nights
Tokyo, Karuizawa, Yudanaka, Kanazawa, Takayama
Discovery, Culture, History**

Starting in the giant metropolis of Tokyo, head to the countryside aboard the shinkansen bullet train and fall in love with the rustic beauty of the central region of the country on this 12-day tour.

Day 1: Tokyo

Tokyo is a city of contrasts. This front-line capital famous for its pioneering modernity, iconic landscapes of neon and soaring skyscrapers is dotted with peaceful parklands, shrines, temples and adored gardens. Despite its mania for anime pop culture, fashion, digital trends and discernable consumption, the city embraces an ancient heritage evident in the temples and shrines scattered amongst the vast skyrises. The Imperial Palace provides a palpable link to the city's incredible heritage even with the explosion of commercial emporia. Free from the shopping and entertainment districts, historic wooden house, private bonsai gardens and the calming Zen atmosphere of the Hamarikyu Gardens thrive to allow visitors an escape from the hyperactivity of the lively streets. Even with the city's costly reputation visitors can take advantage of the inexpensive izakaya bars and neighborhood cafes serving delectable noodle and rice dishes. In fact, many of Tokyo's charms can be enjoyed free of charge; stroll through Asakusa and the Buddhist temple Sensoji, the fashion Mecca of Harajuku, the world's largest fish market at Tsukiji, or the neon-imbued atmosphere of Shinjuku and be enveloped by Japan's largest city.

On your arrival at Narita Airport, you will be met by an assistant at the arrival lobby for your shared transfer to your hotel in Tokyo. You will have the rest of the day to spend at your leisure after check-in.

Option: [1] Mobile Internet SIM card

Stay connected while in Japan with a SIM card to use on your unlocked smartphone or tablet! The SIM will allow you to connect your device to mobile internet with up to 2GB data traffic. Please let us know your device brand and model at the time of booking.

Option: [2] Upgrade to private airport transfer

Day 2: Tokyo

Take a day tour of this fascinating city with a local guide. The day begins with a visit to Meiji Shrine, a shrine dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings. Take a walk down Omotesando shopping street, a broad tree-lined avenue home to the flagship stores of the world's top fashion brands. Head across town to Asakusa, Tokyo's old town where you can soak in the atmosphere of the Tokyo of old. Visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple and wander down Nakamise, a shopping street that has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional, local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries. End your day in Hamarikyu garden, an Edo Period Japanese garden surrounded by the Shiodome district's futuristic skyscrapers, a great example of how Japan is the land of contrasts, where you will stop for a cup of steaming matcha and Japanese sweets in a tea house on a small island in the park's lake. [B]

Option: [3] Upgrade to a private Tokyo tour

Day 3: Tokyo, Karuizawa

Karuizawa is an upscale mountain resort town at the foot of the active volcano Mount Asama in Nagano Prefecture. It was first "discovered" and promoted as a mountain resort by Western residents of Japan in the late 1800s. Nowadays, many wealthy urbanites own a second home in Karuizawa. Located at an altitude of roughly 3,280 feet, the mountain resort provides a pleasant escape from the summer heat. Thanks to the Nagano Shinkansen (opened in 1998), it now takes little more than an hour to reach Karuizawa from central Tokyo. Various outdoor activities, such as tennis, hiking, cycling, golfing in summer and skiing and skating in winter can be enjoyed in Karuizawa, and there are plenty of shopping and natural sightseeing opportunities.

Ride the bullet train with your guide from Tokyo to Karuizawa, in nearby Nagano prefecture. Just 1 hour away from Tokyo, Karuizawa is a delightful upscale resort town where many Tokyoites own a vacation home. While it has quite a different atmosphere from ancient cities such as Kyoto and Nara, it possesses a delightful retro atmosphere and beautiful nature. Plus, it is cool in summer as well as offers beautiful red leaves in autumn and enchanting snow sceneries in winter. First, you will visit Karuizawa Ginza, a shopping street with a romantic ambiance where you may stroll and taste the famed local desserts (not included). Towards the end of the shopping street stands the Shaw Memorial Church, founded in 1895 by a missionary named A.C. Shaw, who popularized Karuizawa as a vacation destination. You will then visit the Former Mikasa Hotel. One of Japan's first Western style hotels, it served travelers to Karuizawa from 1906 until 1970. Today, it is a National Cultural Heritage, and it is open to the public as a museum. Time to discover Karuizawa's natural side with a visit to Usui Pass. Beautiful views over the mountains of Gunma Prefecture on one side and Mount Asama on the other side can be enjoyed from this observation platform, as well as nearby Kumano Kotai Shrine. Next, you will head north for a visit to breathtaking Shiraito no Taki Waterfalls. Their name literally means "the waterfall of white threads", which aptly describes its appearance, as multiple streaks of water drape over the surface forming what seems like a white curtain. Lastly, you will head to your ryokan for check-in. [B]

Option: [4] Upgrade to a private Karuizawa tour

Day 4: Karuizawa, Yudanaka

Dating back hundreds of years, Yudanaka Onsen's long history as a hot spring resort makes it one of the best destinations to enjoy the hot springs in a traditional atmosphere. Inside the station is the Kaede no Yu public bath, allowing visitors to relax immediately upon arrival. A free footbath is located outside the station for travelers not quite ready to entirely submerge in the water. Visitors aren't the only ones who can enjoy the soothing hot springs, with Japan's famous Snow Monkeys sharing the water in the Jigokudani Monkey Park. Jigokudani derives its name "hell's valley" from crevices spurting steam and boiling water creating natural hot spring baths. It is in these baths the monkeys like to immerse in. The monkeys live in large social groups, giving way to some entertaining interactions. Accustomed to humans, they can be observed from nearby without interruption. Whilst the monkeys are most numerous during the colder months, they can be observed all year round.

Your visit of Nagano will be self-guided. You can reach Yudanaka immediately or visit Nagano city on own. Nagano is famous for its soba noodles, so we recommend sampling some for lunch. You may want to visit historic Zenkoji temple, a short bus ride from Nagano station. One of the most visited temples in Japan, Zenkoji was founded 1400 years ago and stores, what many believe to be the first Buddhist statue ever brought to Japan. A copy of the statue is shown to the public every six years for a few weeks, the next opportunity being in 2015. Most recently rebuilt in 1707, Zenkoji's main hall has a tunnel in its basement in which visitors are trying to find and touch the "key to paradise" in complete darkness. The key is attached to the wall and grants enlightenment to anybody who touches it. From Nagano, you will then take a local train to Yudanaka (45min – a pass to ride the train is included), and then it is a short ride in the shuttle bus to your hotel. When you depart Nagano, please call the hotel (the staff speaks English) so they will know when to come and pick you up at Yudanaka station). [B/D]

Option: [5] Upgrade to Green Class

Day 5: Yudanaka

Your day is self-guided. Below are our recommendations on how to spend it.

This morning you can head to the Jigokudani Yaen Koen to see the famous Snow Monkeys. Jigokudani literally means 'hell's valley' due to the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the frozen ground, and it is in the baths of this boiling water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak in on. The monkeys live in large social groups, and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions. Accustomed to humans, they can be observed from very close and almost completely ignore their human guests. Whilst the monkeys are most numerous during the colder months, they can be observed all year round. Please notice that the entrance to the park is located a 15/20 minutes hike away from the closest point reachable by bus or car. The hike is very leisurely and scenic, with moderate to no slopes.

In the afternoon we recommend a visit to the nearby charming town of Obuse (you can reach it using your included train pass), with traditional houses, stores and streets. Obuse is known for its delicious chestnuts and as the home of Hokusai, the famous painter and printmaker from Japan's Edo period, and a visit to his museum here is a must. Over 100 houses in the town participate in an 'Open Garden' scheme. If you see this sign in front of the house, it means you can enter the property and enjoy the gardens, giving you a unique insight into Japanese houses. No visit to Obuse is complete without stopping in at the Masuichi sake brewery for a taste of their delicious sake made from the high quality local rice. Another amazing dinner will be served at your ryokan. [B/D]

Day 6: Yudanaka, Kanazawa

During the Edo Period, Kanazawa served as the seat of the Maeda Clan, the second most powerful feudal clan after the Tokugawa in terms of rice production and fief size. Accordingly, Kanazawa grew to become a town of great cultural achievements, rivalling Kyoto and Tokyo. During World War II, Kanazawa was Japan's second largest city to escape destruction by air raids and, consequently, historic areas such as the Nagamachi samurai district and Chaya entertainment districts were preserved in an almost original state. Amongst its numerous historical attractions, modern museums are also a popular venue for exploration. The unrivalled main attraction of Kanazawa however, is the Kenrokuen, one of Japan's "three best landscape gardens", and is considered by many the most beautiful of them all.

Today will be spent at your leisure until your train ride from Yudanaka station to Nagano station, for this leg of the journey all but a small fee for the express ticket is covered by your 2-day train pass. The express ticket fee will be purchasable on the spot. Next, you will take a ride aboard the bullet train from Nagano station to Kanazawa with your included tickets, taking roughly 1.5 hours to reach your destination. Upon your arrival, you will make your own way from Kanazawa station to your hotel. [B]

Option: [6] Transfer Kanazawa Station to Kanazawa Hotel

Option: [7] Upgrade to Green Class

Day 7: Kanazawa

During the Edo Period, Kanazawa served as the seat of the Maeda Clan, the second most powerful feudal clan; Kanazawa grew to become a town of great cultural achievements, rivaling Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo). During World War Two, Kanazawa was Japan's second largest city (after Kyoto) to escape destruction by air raids. Consequently, parts of the old castle town, such as the Nagamachi samurai district and chaya entertainment districts, have survived. Today, the city boasts many historical attractions such as restored residences and districts, as well as modern museums.

Today you will have the full day to explore Kanazawa with a local guide. The highlight of any visit to Kanazawa is Kenroku-en garden. Ranked one of the top threes in Japan, its breathtaking beauty shines through in any season. You will also be visiting the imposing Kanazawa castle, located next to the garden. Nearby Kagayuzen Kaikan offers demonstrations of the centuries-old Yuzen silk painting technique. Head to visit the Nagamachi Samurai district, where you can enter the Nomura Samurai House, a traditional Japanese home with tea-ceremony room, an interior courtyard garden and artifacts from the Edo period. The Higashi Chaya District is the largest and by far the most interesting of Kanazawa's Geisha Districts. Many of the buildings along the central street now house cafes and shops. One of the shops, Hakuza, sells gold leaf products, a specialty of Kanazawa, and displays a kura warehouse style room which is completely covered in gold leaf; you will also have a chance to visit the Shima teahouse, which is still an operating tea house, but opens its doors to the public. You can enjoy a cup of green tea here to finish the day. [B]

Option: [8] Upgrade to a private Kanazawa tour

Day 8: Kanawaza, Shirakawago, Takayama

Reach Shirakawa-go region from Kanazawa (1.5 hours). Your guide will show you around the village, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. Gassho-zukkuri translates as 'Praying Hands', as the farmhouses' steep thatched roofs resemble the hands of Buddhist

monks pressed together in prayer, and are designed to withstand the heavy snows which fall in the region. You will have lunch in a typical restaurant and have soba noodles, Shirakawago's specialty, before the journey back to Kanazawa. You will part ways with your guide at the Shirakawago bus terminal and board the train heading towards Takayama. [B/L]

Option: [9] Upgrade to a private Shirakawago tour

Day 9: Takayama

You will be picked up by taxi from your hotel and dropped off at the meeting point for a food and culture themed private walking tour. Today, you will stroll through the old town district of Takayama, which is full of traditional buildings and many small family-run businesses that have been in operation for multiple generations. Sample some of Takayama's unique local delicacies on your stroll through town. There is also time scheduled for a sake tasting so you can try some of the rice wine that is famous in the region. Please note that participants must be above 20 (the legal drinking age in Japan) to participate in the sake tasting. After the tour ends, you will have the rest of the day to further explore Takayama before making your own way back to the hotel. [B/S]

Day 10: Takayama, Tokyo

Your morning is free until your scheduled train ride from Takayama station to Nagoya station, taking roughly 2.5 hours. Here, you will transfer onto the shinkansen to Tokyo station (roughly 1 hour 45 mins). When you arrive back in Tokyo, you will make your own way from the station to your hotel. [B]

Day 11: Tokyo

You will have today to spend at your leisure in Tokyo. [B]

Day 12: Tokyo, USA

Your day is free until your scheduled shared transfer to Narita Airport in time for your return flight. [B]

Option: [10] Upgrade to private airport transfer

[B] = Breakfast | [B/L] = Breakfast and Lunch | [B/S] = Breakfast and Snack | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner

Your Tour includes:

- Arrival and departure transfers
- 11 nights accommodation
 - Tokyo – 4 nights
 - Karuizawa – 1 night
 - Yudanaka – 2 nights
 - Kanazawa – 2 nights
 - Takayama – 2 nights
- Meals
 - Breakfast daily
 - Lunches: 1
 - Snacks: 1
 - Dinners: 2
- Tours of:
 - Tokyo
 - Karuizawa
 - Kanazawa
 - Shirakawago
 - Entrance fees
 - English speaking tour guides

- 2nd class train tickets:
 - Tolyo- Karuizawa
 - Karuizawa-Yudanaka
 - Yudanaka-Kanazawa
 - Kanazawa-Takayama
 - Takayama-Tokyo

Your Tour does not include:

- International or domestic airfares
- Taxes and fees related to air transportation
- Visa or other required legal travel documents
- Excess luggage
- Optional activities
- Travel Insurance
- Tips to guides or drivers
- Expenses of a personal nature
- Meals other than specified as included
- Drinks or personal expenses
- Entrance fees for any extra sightseeing or optional activities

Hotels in your tour:

Category	City	Hotel Name	Tripadvisor
Standard	Tokyo	Shiba Park	4
	Karuizawa	Karuizawa Prince West	4
	Yudanaka	Biyu no Yado	5
	Kanazawa	Resol Trinity	4
	Takayama	Best Western	4
Superior	Tokyo	Keio Plaza	4
	Karuizawa	Karuizawa Marriott	4
	Yudanaka	Biyu no Yado	5
	Kanazawa	Tokyu	4
	Takayama	Hida Plaza	4

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

Tour Prices:

Category	Double	Single*	Single**	Triple	4 Pax
Standard Hotels	4,209	6,125	4,859	3,435	3,365
Superior Hotels	5,065	7,475	6,215	4,249	4,225

* Single traveling alone

** Single traveling with others

Prices are valid January 4 through December 29 2018, are per person and may change without notice.

Prices may be subject to supplement due to local events or seasons and will be confirmed at time of booking.

Options:

Description	Type	1 Pax	2 Pax	3 Pax	4 Pax
[1] SIM card (per card)	2 GB	\$49			
[2] Airport Transfer Upgrade	Private	\$325	\$145	\$325	\$99
[3] Tokyo tour upgrade	Private	\$849	\$415	\$849	\$319
[4] Karuizawa Tour upgrade	Private	\$755	\$445	\$755	\$355
[5] Karuizawa-Yudanaka Train	1st Class	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35
[6] Kanazawa Station to hotel transfer	Private	\$105	\$49	\$105	\$95
[7] Yudanaka-Kanazawa Train upgrade	1st Class	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35
[8] Kanazawa Tour upgrade	Private	\$645	\$319	\$645	\$255
[9] Shirakawago Tour upgrade	Private	\$695	\$315	\$695	\$235
[10] Narita Airport transfer upgrade	Private	\$419	\$175	\$419	\$115

Prices are per person and may change without notice

Tour Code: JP05TYO18AD

