

**The Japanese Alps  
11 days – 10 nights  
Tokyo, Matsumoto, Takayama, Kyoto, Hakone, Mt. Fuji  
Discovery, Culture, History**

**Japan**

*Japan is a country of mountains. With over seventy-percent of the country being mountainous terrain, it's no wonder that mountains have religious and culture importance to the Japanese. In particular, the Japan Alps region offers stunning views of scenic alpine landscapes. Using a variety of transportation including the famous shinkansen bullet train, you will travel through this region, then pay a visit to the ancient capital Kyoto, and finally relax in the hot springs town of Hakone with the awe-inspiring Mt. Fuji close by.*

**Day 1: Tokyo****Tokyo**

*One of the World's most cutting-edge capitals, Tokyo is a city of contrasts. Famous for its cutting edge modernity, neon-lit landscape and towering skyscrapers, it is also home to sprawling parkland, peaceful shrines and temples and lovingly tended gardens. Despite its love affair with manga pop culture, fashion, high-tech trends and conspicuous consumption, below the surface is a city that has its roots in an ancient heritage. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples stand close to skyscrapers as a reminder of a more contemplative time and at the heart of the hyperactive centre lies the serene Imperial Palace, the home of the ruling emperor that provides a tangible link to the city's historical past. Behind the shopping, entertainment and commercial emporia can be found quaint wooden houses, private gardens with meticulously clipped bonsai trees and the Zen-like calm of the Hamarikyu Gardens. The city's reputation as a mega-expensive metropolis is ill conceived and visitors can take advantage of inexpensive izakaya bars and neighborhood cafes that serve delicious noodles and rice dishes.*

On arrival at either Narita or Haneda Airport, you will be met by your driver who will assist you with the shared transfer to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

**[1] Option: 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 up to 2GB data traffic. Please let us know your device brand and model at the time of booking.

**[2] Option: Upgrade to private airport transfer****Day 2: Tokyo**

Take a day tour of this fascinating city with a local guide, making use of Tokyo's comprehensive and user friendly public transport system. 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. Take a boat cruise on the Sumida River passing under 12 bridges. Disembark 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]

**[3] Option: Upgrade to private tour**

**Day 3: Tokyo, Matsumoto****Matsumoto**

*Located 3 hours from Tokyo, Matsumoto has flourished as a castle town since the 16th century. In addition to its historical and cultural heritage Matsumoto is surrounded by mountains and is acclaimed for its beautiful views. Hiking and climbing locations in the mountains are readily accessible by local bus transportation. To the west the Japan Alps rise to heights of 3,000 meters, and are known as "The Roof of Japan".*

Ride the train to Matsumoto (3hrs) using the included JR Pass. You will have free time to visit Matsumoto castle and explore the surrounding town, including Nakamachi, a former merchant district full of preserved warehouses turned into restaurants, cafes and shops. We also recommend the Japan Ukiyoe Museum is home to over 100,000 of these famous Japanese woodblock prints, making it one of the world's largest private art collections. [B]

**[4] Option: Tokyo Hotel to Shinjuku Station Transfer****Day 4: Matsumoto**

Today there are no planned activities.

You may choose to continue exploring Matsumoto, or make the below suggested day trip. Your day is self-guided. [B]

**Day Trip Suggestion – Snow Monkeys and Nagano (self-guided)**

This morning you can choose to head to Nagano to visit historic Zenkoji temple.

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. 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. After visiting Zenkoji, continue on by train and bus (not covered by your JR Pass, to be paid on the spot) to visit Jigokudani Park 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.

**Day 5: Matsumoto, Takayama****Takayama**

*With its plethora of temples, shrines, festivals, rivers and bridges the mountain town of Takayama has been called a "little Kyoto". The region is an agricultural one, and every day the freshest of vegetables and fruit are brought by local farmers to Takayama's lively morning market. Many unique traditions have evolved here, and due to the town's previously inaccessible location high in the Hida alpine region, a remarkable number of them have been preserved. The district called San-machi Suji, the traditional home of Takayama merchants and sake brewers, has been preserved in almost exactly the same state as 200 or 300 years ago. Here, are inns, shops and taverns which trace their history back many generations.*

Travel by coach to Takayama. This afternoon we recommend visiting one of the town's many sake breweries for a taste of the local drop, its high quality due to the area's clean water sources. Tonight you will stay in Japanese style ryokan accommodation with hot spring onsen bath. [B]

**Day 6: Takayama (Shirakawago)**

Your day is self-guided. [B]

**Day Trip Suggestion- (self-guided)**

After breakfast you may head up to the Miyagawa morning market with stalls selling local crafts and produce. This is a great opportunity to try some of the region's delicious fruit and vegetables. A short

bus ride will take you to Hida No Sato Folk Village, an open air museum exhibiting over 30 typical farmhouses and other traditional buildings from the Hida region. There is also a workshop in the village illustrating how many of Japan's famous handicrafts are made, including woodcarving, tie-dyeing, weaving, and lacquering. In the afternoon you can visit the Takayama Festival Floats museum, displaying floats from the famous Takayama festival, or simply wander through the beautifully preserved old town. You can also make a half-day trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Shirakawago village, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. Gassho-zukuri 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. Busses depart frequently from Takayama Bus Terminal (ticket to be paid on the spot – not covered by JR Pass).

### Day 7: Takayama, Kyoto

Travel by train to Kyoto (3hrs) using your JR Pass. Japanese cuisine has such high reputation that it was declared UNESCO Intangible World Heritage. This afternoon you will try your hand at making some of the dishes that made this cuisine so popular in the world. This class is a great way to immerse yourself in Japanese dining culture as well as learn authentic and popular Japanese foods that are eaten at home and in local restaurants. The course consists of two parts. First, you will cook 2~3 dishes and enjoy them. Then you will return to the kitchen and learn 2~3 more dishes before eating once more. Enjoy cooking and eating a variety of dishes in cozy atmosphere just like in Izakaya restaurants (Japanese style pubs)! You will be making your own way to and from the cooking class. [B]

#### [5] Option: Kyoto Station to Kyoto Hotel Transfer

### Day 8: Kyoto

#### Kyoto

*This is a must see destination in Japan. Kyoto is the nation's former capital and was the residence of the emperor from 794 until 1868. It is Japan's seventh largest metropolis with a population of around 1.4 million and a city of culture that offers a plethora of temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures that still survive today. With 2,000 religious buildings, including 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, as well as palaces, gardens and associated architecture, it is one of the best preserved cities in Japan and has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. Kyoto represents the "Japan of old" and beyond the high rise skyscrapers built as a monument to progress, the real monument to Japan's historical and cultural past can be found in the city's narrow alleyways where tea houses abound and kimono-clad geisha hurry from elegant function to function. This is a place to go back in time to Japan's mysterious past where echoes of the court nobility resonate at the Imperial Palace and the search for contemplation can be found in Ryoanji's Zen rock gardens.*

Today you explore the former imperial capital with a knowledgeable local guide, utilizing Kyoto's comprehensive bus system to visit some of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites. You will start your day with a visit to **Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion)**, which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun. After his death it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples. **Nijo Castle** is an ornamental castle was built by the founder of the Edo Shogunate as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by stunning surrounding gardens. The main building was completed in 1603, and is famous for its architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors. Take a walk down **Nishiki Market**, a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. Known as "Kyoto's Kitchen", this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi. Final stop today is **Kiyomizu (Pure Water) Temple**. From the 13m high veranda jutting out from the Main Hall you can enjoy amazing views of the whole of Kyoto, whilst pondering the fact that both the Main Hall and Veranda were built without the use of nails or any kind of joiners. [B]

#### [6] Option: Upgrade to private tour

**Day 9: Kyoto, Hakone**

**Hakone**

*Hakone is a natural nature wonderland and is famous for its hot springs, outdoor pursuits and the view of the nearby Mount Fuji. It is part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park and is less than 100-km from Tokyo, thereby providing a popular weekend destination for city residents keen to escape the frenzy of the capital. Beautiful Hakone has about everything a vacationer could wish for. Besides the towering mountains, lakes and views of Mount Fuji, it is also blessed with interesting historical sites. You can tour Hakone as a day trip if you leave early enough in the morning and limit your sightseeing to a few key attractions, but adding an overnight stay, including a soak in a hot-spring tub, is definitely recommended.*

Take Japan's world famous Shinkansen bullet train to Hakone (2hr) using your JR Pass. Armed with your Hakone Free Pass, take advantage of the extensive local transport network to explore this stunning region. From switchback trains to cable cars, ropeways to buses and even a pirate ship that will sweep you across the volcanic Lake Ashi with views of Mt Fuji. Tonight you will stay in a Japanese traditional ryokan, sleeping on futons laid out on tatami mats with delicious included meals and piping hot onsen (hot spring) baths. [B/D]

**Day 10: Hakone, Tokyo**

Take the aptly named Romance Car train back to Tokyo (1.5hrs). You will then enjoy free time at leisure. [B]

**[7] Option: Old Tokyo walking tour**

This afternoon explore Tokyo's shitamachi (downtown). Our image of Tokyo is usually that of a super-modern metropolis but suburbs like **Yanaka**, which was miraculously spared the carnage of the Allied bombings in World War II, still preserve a nostalgic atmosphere. Part of its charm today lies in this sense of being hidden. Visit old temples and shrines, one of Tokyo's oldest Buddhist cemeteries as well as traditional shops selling Japanese paper and sweets, and soak in the atmosphere of pre-war Tokyo. Take a look at what life in this area used to be like in the **Shitamachi Museum**, located in Ueno Park. One of the most popular parks for hanami (cherry blossom parties) in Tokyo, **Ueno Park** was originally part of Kaneiji Temple, which used to be one of the city's largest and wealthiest temples and a family temple of the ruling Tokugawa clan during the Edo Period. Your guide will take you on a stroll to show you the many attractions that enrich this large park. Last stop for the day is Ueno's **Ameyoko-cho**, a busy market street underneath the train lines. Originally the site of a black market after World War Two, this bustling market is the last of its kind in Tokyo, and is filled with shops and stalls selling various products such as fresh fish, dried food and spices. At one of the many open air restaurants under the train tracks, you can stop for a cold drink and a yakitori (grilled chicken skewer).

**Day 11: Tokyo, USA**

The day is at leisure until your included transfer to the airport. [B]

**[8] Option: Tokyo to Narita transfer upgrade**

[B] = Breakfast | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner



**Tour Price Includes:**

- Arrival and departure transfers
- 10 nights accommodation at chosen hotels:
  - Tokyo – 3 nights
  - Matsumoto – 2 nights
  - Takayama – 2 night
  - Kyoto – 2 nights
  - Hakone – 1 night
- Meals
  - Daily breakfast
  - 1 dinner
- Japan Rail Pass valid 7 days in ordinary class, to use from days 2 to 8
- Hakone Free Pass valid 2 days, to use on days 9 and 10
- Full day tour of Tokyo including entrance fees
- JR Pass Coach ticket Matsumoto
- Full day tour of Kyoto including entrance fees

**Tour Price Does Not Include:**

- Air tickets, taxes and surcharges
- International or domestic border taxes
- Meals and services not mentioned in the itinerary
- Travel Insurance
- Expenses of a personal nature (minibar, phone call, laundry, etc.)
- Any guiding, transfer or service not expressly mentioned in the text are not included in the tour
- Drinks with meals or others
- Hotels' early check- in (before 2:00 pm) or late check-out (after 4:00 pm)
- Entrance fees or extra charges for any optional activities or extra sightseeing not mentioned as included in the above itinerary.
- Tips to guides, drivers and hotel/restaurant staff

**Hotels in tour:**

City	Hotel Name	Room Type	Tripadvisor
<b>Standard Grade</b>			
<b>Tokyo:</b>	Villa Fontaine Shiodome	Standard	4
<b>Matsumoto:</b>	Tokyu REI Matsumoto	Standard	4
<b>Takayama:</b>	Honjin Hiranoya Bekkan	Standard Japanese	4.5
<b>Kyoto:</b>	Vista Premio Kyoto	Standard	4
<b>Hakone:</b>	Yutorelo An Ryokan	Standard Japanese	3.5
<b>Superior Grade</b>			
<b>Tokyo</b>	Park Hotel	City	4.5
<b>Matsumoto</b>	Buena Vista Matsumoto	Executive	4
<b>Takayama</b>	Koto no Yume	10-tatami Japanese	4.5
<b>Kyoto</b>	Kyoto Tokyu	Standard with view	4.5
<b>Hakone</b>	Gora Sounkaku Ryokan	Standard Japanese	4.5

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

**Note:** As ryokan do not usually offer single rooms, for single travelers we might have to offer western style accommodation (still including dinner and hot springs)

**Tour Price:**

Category	Double	Single*	Single**	Triple	4 Pax
<b>Standard Grade Hotels</b>	2,979	5,129	4,375	2,505	2,659
<b>Superior Grade Hotels</b>	3,419	5,315	4,555	3,105	3,099

\* Single traveling alone

\*\* Single traveling with others

Prices are per person, are valid from 1 January 2018 through 31 December 2018 and may change without notice

**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] Tokyo Hotel to Shinjuku Station Transfer	By Taxi	\$209	\$105	\$209	\$79
	By Car	\$279	\$139	\$279	\$115
[5] Kyoto Station to Kyoto Hotel Transfer	By Taxi	\$209	\$105	\$209	\$79
	By Car	\$255	\$125	\$255	\$105
[6] Kyoto tour upgrade	Private	\$625	\$305	\$625	\$239
[7] Old Tokyo Walking Tour	Shared	\$379	\$209	\$379	\$155
	Private	\$875	\$449	\$875	\$349
[8] Narita Airport transfer	Private	\$419	\$175	\$419	\$115

Prices are per person and may change without notice

**Tour Code:** JP04TYO18DA