

DISCOVERY TOUR

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2024 SPIRITUAL WALKS OF NORTHERN JAPAN

2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan takes you through spiritual mountains, national parks ablaze in autumn colours and authentic onsen villages. An ideal opportunity to be stunned by the beautiful Japanese rural landscapes and the warm traditional hospitality of northern Japan.

"A top quality, well planned & organised small group tour..."
— Ross & Rosalind Hayward



DURATION
7 days



THEME
Autumn Tours, Remote Japan Tours, Walking Tours



GROUP SIZE
Min 4 - Max 8



TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



Hagurosan

Experience the training of shugendo in spiritual mountains of Dewa Sanzan.



Yamadera

Climb a fascinating trail with a reward of the outstanding views from an historic temple at the top.



Zao

Enjoy the walks though this unusual landscape and witness the amazing colours of the calderas.



Iaido

Try iaido, a Japanese martial art using a Japanese sword as a prop.



Onsen

Experience Japanese favorite pastime, onsen, mineral hot spring bath - an exceptional way to relax after a good walk.



Nikko

Immerse yourself in the autumn colours at the Nikko National Park.



 [SEE FULL TOUR ITINERARY](#)

Tour Overview

2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan takes you to walks in the hauntingly beautiful northern part of Honshu (main) Island of Japan known as “Tohoku” for 13 days.

After arriving in Tokyo, your tour will travel to the **three mountains of spiritual Dewa Sanzan** (the northern answer to southern **Kumano Kodo**); walk the **Zao caldera amid the mass of autumn colours**; visit the temple atop **Yamadera with its panoramic views**; immerse yourself in **the colours in Goshikinuma (five coloured lakes) of Urabandai**.

Specialist northern Japan travel guides will help you to get the most from your northern Honshu tour; **the local culture, the history and of course the best walking tracks of Tohoku**. Seeing regional cities and small towns on foot with your guide will also give you some exceptional insights into the life in this part of Japan.

This is a perfect tour for people who love walking in spiritually rich areas surrounded by natural beauty, **especially for those who are keen to discover Japan beyond the giant cities**. This Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan covers locations that are less visited by international tourists.

Each walk is **typically 5 to 10 kms**, packed with interesting experiences such as **Shugendo and Iaido**. You will also have plenty of opportunities to explore the area at your leisure, too.

The **2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan** conveniently sets out **from Tokyo and ends in Tokyo**. We will assist you with transferring from here to your next destination whether that is an airport, or other parts of Japan. We highly recommend you spend a few extra days at the beginning and/or the end of the group tour to discover endless attractions of Tokyo, especially if you are a first-time visitor of Japan. Journey to the East will be delighted to plan your private itinerary and provide information to suit your interests.

Click each day in the itinerary below for your day to day experiences.

ITINERARY

 [DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY](#)

▼ Day 1: Arrival in Tokyo
<p>Welcome to Japan! On arrival at any of Tokyo's international airports, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel at Haneda International Airport. After a good night's sleep, you will be ready to start the first full day of your 2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan.</p> <p>No group activity is planned today.</p> <div><div> Haneda (Villa Fontaine Haneda Grande)</div><div> No meals</div></div>
▼ Day 2: Transfer to Dewa Sanzan
<div></div> <p>Leaving Tokyo behind, you will transfer to Yamagata in Tohoku (northern region of the Honshu Island) by domestic flight. The next couple of days you will walk through the fascinating area of Dewa Sanzan (meaning the three mountains of Dewa). Dewa Sanzan is a religious hot-spot where Animism, Shintoism, Buddhism and Shugendo have coexisted over the course of its history. It is such an inspirational place, culturally rich and so much to take in that you cannot avoid feeling connection with nature and spirituality of the location.</p> <p>After arriving at Hagurosan area, your guide will lead you to visit a museum which explains the area and its history.</p> <p>Tonight you stay at a shukubo (working temple lodging) to prepare for the pilgrims' walk the next day. Dinner tonight is shojinryori, Buddhist vegetarian cuisine served with the regions fresh rice, mountain vegetables and mushrooms (you never knew a vegetarian dinner could taste so good!).</p> <p>(No group walking today)</p> <div><div> Tsuruoka (Daishinbo - private room with a shared bathroom)</div><div> Breakfast, Dinner</div></div>



▼ Day 3: Hagurosan



Dewa Sanzan (three Mountains of Dewa) has continued to be a place of worship for the last 1,400 years. **The three mountains represent the past, present and future, and one should visit the three in succession.**



Before embarking on the ancient pilgrimage route of the Dewa Sanzan, **you will dress up as yamabushi (mountain ascetic monk) and have a shugendo training** in a museum at the foot of Hagurosan.

The **first mountain is Hagurosan (past)** where you will walk along a series of **stone steps among spectacular, towering, cedar trees**. Along the way, you will see many interesting sights not least of which is **the 600-year-old, Five Story Pagoda** (*the Five Story Pagoda may be partially covered for maintenance in 2024). At the top of Hasurosan stands **one of the largest thatched buildings in Japan, the Sanjin Gosaiden** shrine. **The walk is only 1.7 km (mainly stone steps) but takes around 1.5 hours.**

After lunch at a local restaurant, you will transfer to tonight destination, a small onsen (hot spring spa) hamlet. You will visit some interesting temples and gardens on the way.

Tonight, accommodation is at a small local ryokan, where you will **experience your first onsen, hot mineral springs spa bath** on this tour. Our guide will talk you through the ritual and etiquette of the Japanese bath and explain why a visit to an onsen remains one of the nation's most popular pastimes.

(Total walking distance today - about 5-6 km)

-  Tsuruoka (Ochimizu no yu Tsutaya)
-  Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 4: Gassan and Yudonosan

The second mountain, **Gassan (present)** can only be accessed during good weather as it's walking track is along the open ridge of the mountain. At the 8th station of Gassan we take **the 2 km circuit boardwalk through the beautiful wetland** (about 1.5 hours).

You will then tacklethe last mountain, **Yudonosan (future or rebirth)**. This is such **a mysterious mountain** and there are so many secret rituals in this part of the pilgrimage. One of the reasons why **it remains mysterious is because visitors are not allowed to take photographs** while you are in the sacred area of this mountain. This means that **the experience is truly reserved for the people actually visit there**. It is also a naturally beautiful area displaying autumn colours this time of the year.

Tonight you will head to Yamagata City to have a good rest before your next adventure.

Yamagata is at the heart of Tohoku, with numerous local specialty foods, sake and festivals. You will enjoy the Tohoku hospitality at a local izakaya restaurant tonight along with cultural entertainment.

(Total walking distance today - about 7 km)

-  Yamagata (Hotel Metropolitan Yamagata)
-  Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 5: Yamadera





Our target today is Hojusan Risshakuji, commonly known as **Yamadera (literally translates "mountain temple")**. Yamadera was established in 860, by the Buddhist monk Jikaku-daishi and is one of the leading sacred places in the Tohoku Region. Once you begin the ascent of the 1,100 stone steps, you will be fascinated along the way by the dozens of stone monuments, small temples, groups of massive rocks and each with their own story. On reaching Godaido (small temple hall) at the top **the view is something you don't want to miss and will never forget**. The ascent takes around 0.5 to 1 hour. You can also enjoy local crafts and restaurants on the way out.

In the afternoon, **yet another special experience awaits**. You will be **a samurai and try iaido**, a traditional Japanese martial art that focuses on training the mind and body with a traditional sword. Iaido is termed as **"the art of the sword without fighting"** and is more for spiritual training rather than focusing on techniques of using sword.

Back at the hotel in Yamagata, you enjoy the last night of hospitable Yamagata.

(Total walking distance today - about 6 km)

-  Yamagata (Hotel Metropolitan Yamagata)
-  Breakfast

▼ Day 6: Zao





Our private minivan takes you off to **Zao**, well-known as a winter ski resort, but **in autumn it is simply splendid**. In Zao you will;

- Ascend by a **cable car and a chair lift** to the mountain plateau,
- Take an **incredible guided hike** on one of the many walking courses **amongst blazing autumn coloured mountains**, and
- Walk along **the picturesque caldera lakes and waterfalls**. At this time of the year the pristine landscape will stun you.

In the afternoon, you will visit a local pottery kiln for some artistic activity. **Japanese pottery** is very popular amongst international visitors **for its earthy colours and minimalistic design**. Why not find your special piece, or better still, make your own!

Tonight you will stay at a traditional ryokan at another onsen town in Yamagata. Enjoy kaiseki dinner, onsen bath and futon bedding.

(Total walking distance today - about 10 km)

 **Kaminoyama Onsen (Koyo)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 7: Urabandai

Transfer from Yamagata to the very special Urabandai. Along the way, you will see some spectacular autumn scenery in the southern part of Tohoku region.

Urabandai is a part of **Bandai Asahi National Park**. It is naturally spectacular and relaxing, an ideal spot to enjoy nature at its best. There are many beautiful walking and cycling tracks, and you will walk **arguably the most spectacular walk of all, the Goshikinuma (five coloured lakes) track**. Along the way, you can see the very exotic lakes, each is a distinctly different colour because of the natural mineral content of the water.

Tonight you have another chance of soaking in onsen bath with gorgeous autumn scenery.

(Total walking distance today - about 8-10 km)

 **Urabandai (Urabandai Lake Resort)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 8: Urabandai

Today is a **free day** and it is up to you to make it as busy or as relaxed as you please. **You can walk some of the many walking tracks in Urabandai, rent a bike from the hotel and ride through beautiful autumn avenues, take a cruise on a lake or visit an exquisite art gallery.**

At the end of the day, we will gather together and have a dinner at hotel.

 **Urabandai (Urabandai Lake Resort)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 9: Aizuwakamatsu

Changing the focus from nature to history, today you are in one of the most historically significant cities of Tohoku, **Aizuwakamatsu**. You start your experience at Tsurugajo Castle. During the Boshin War (Fr. 1868) that **eventually reinstated Imperial rule after centuries of samurai rule**, this castle withstood fierce attack by the newly formed Imperial army in a bitter siege that lasted one month.

Inside of the tower there is now **a museum dedicated to the history of Aizuwakamatsu, and the observation gallery at the top offers panoramic views of the city**. You will also visit a former samurai residence and a Japanese garden in the complex.

You then **stroll the charming streets of Nanokamachi which is full of traditional crafts and food items**. In particular, you visit a sake brewery where you can see the sake production method and participate in tasting.

Dinner tonight is a regional cuisine of Aizuwakamatsu at a local restaurant.

(Total walking distance today - about 10 km)

 **Aizuwakamatsu (New Palace Hotel)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 10: Nikko

Travelling further south, you reach one of the most popular holiday destinations of Japan, Nikko. **Nikko's Toshogu Shrine** is designated as **a UNESCO World Heritage site** and steeped in history, but this is not the only reason you are here. In **mid to late October Nikko is ablaze in autumn foliage and it is simply exceptional**. During your stay in Nikko you enjoy many walks around lakes and waterfalls beneath the reds, browns and golds of a Japanese autumn .



(Total walking distance today - about 6 km)

-  Nikko (Oku Nikko Hotel Shikisai)
-  Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 11: Nikko

Continuing to explore Nikko, in fact Oku-Nikko, **deeper into Nikko National Park with spectacular natural beauty**. Today you have opportunities **to walk along the Lake Chuzenji, Ryuzu Waterfall, Yunoko Waterfall and Ramsar registered Senjogahara Marsh**. All in the peak of autumn colours.

(Total walking distance today - about 10 km)

-  Nikko (Oku Nikko Hotel Shikisai)
-  Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 12:

The shinkansen (bullet train) takes you away from Nikko back to Tokyo.

Upon arrival you will have a relaxed last day in Tokyo visiting Marunouchi area in between the beautifully restored 100 year old Tokyo Station and Imperial Palace Plaza. After lunching at a restaurant among the Japanese office workers of Marunouchi, we will continue to Ginza, perhaps the most iconic part of Tokyo with glizzy department stores and high end retailers. Enjoy the contrast with the magnificent nature and colour of beautiful Tohoku.

The farewell dinner tonight will be at a Japanese restaurant high above Tokyo with views of the city and Tokyo Bay.

(Total walking distance today - about 10 km)

-  Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo)
-  Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 13: Bon Voyage

This morning, you check out of your hotel after breakfast and your **2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan** concludes.

You can transfer to Tokyo's Narita or Haneda International Airports for departure, or perhaps linger in Japan a little longer. We will be delighted to plan your personal post-tour extension to show you a different part of Japan. Please see our Extension Model Itinerary for inspirations!

Note: The cost of transfer to your departure airport is not included in our Small Group Tours as we found many guests choose to stay in Japan a bit longer, but we will be happy to arrange your transfer to next destination or to an airport. Please see our FAQ for more details.

- 
-  Breakfast



DATES & PRICES

2024 Spiritual Walks of Northern Japan



Tour Code	Starts	Departs From	Available Places	Currency	PP Twin Share	Single Supplement ?		
GHN-24	Oct 13, 2024	Tokyo (Haneda)	Available	AUD\$	7,800	1,800	Ask a Question	Book Now

You can choose a different currency at the very top right of the page



Inclusions

Each guest is personally looked after with one-on-one interactions with our hand-picked, expert tour guides. As part of your investment, this tour includes:

- ✓ First-class wisdom and higher standard of individual care and attention
- ✓ 12 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)
- ✓ All breakfasts
- ✓ 2 lunches (9 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 10 dinners (1 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Airport meet & greet on arrival in Tokyo
- ✓ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival
- ✓ Domestic flight from Tokyo to Shonai Airport
- ✓ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans)
- ✓ Expert English speaking tour guides (Locally licensed)
- ✓ Cultural activities and entry fees included in itinerary
- ✓ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person)

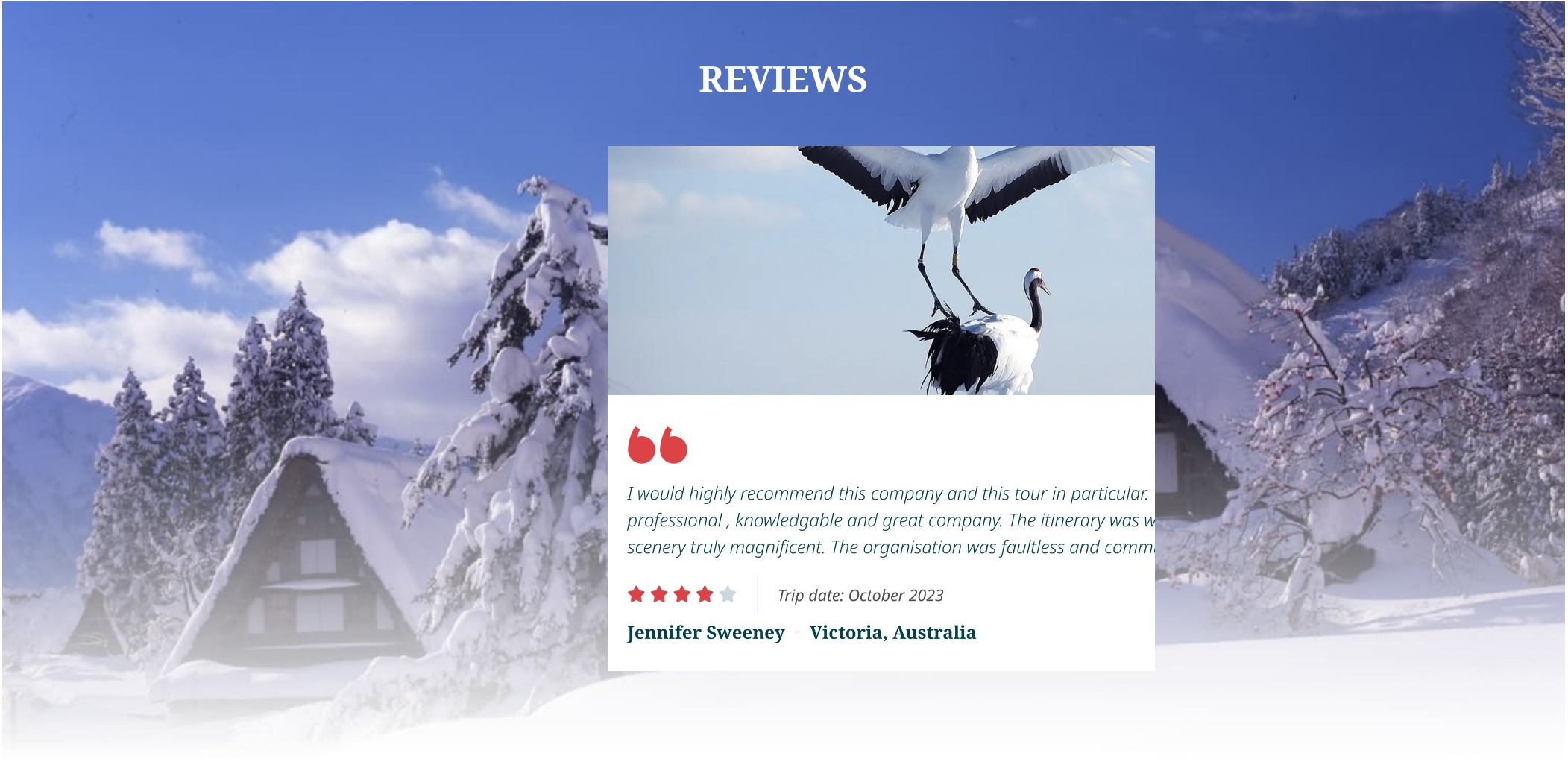
DISCLAIMER: Unless otherwise stated, this tour does not include the costs of international and domestic airfares, transfers on the last day, travel insurance, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, transport during free time, personal expenses (laundry, internet, telephone, coin lockers etc.) and Visa (if required).

Who This Japan Tour Is For...

This is a perfect tour for people who:

- ▶ Want to enjoy short (6-10 km a day) walks in **spiritual and remote part of Japan**
- ▶ Enjoy leisurely walks **without carrying a heavy backpack**
- ▶ Like to have authentic cultural experiences such as a **pilgrimage trail , martial arts and onsen**
- ▶ Wish to learn about Japanese **religions and spirituality**
- ▶ Enjoy **a variety and authenticity in accommodation style** from city hotels to traditional ryokan





REVIEWS



I would highly recommend this company and this tour in particular. professional , knowledgable and great company. The itinerary was w scenery truly magnificent. The organisation was faultless and comm

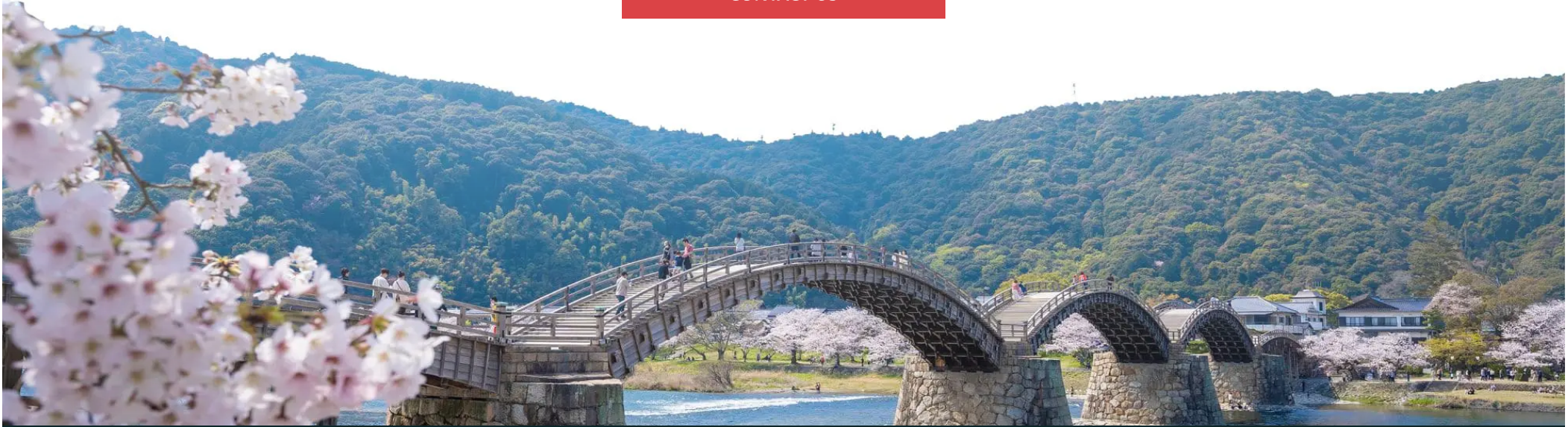


Trip date: October 2023

Jennifer Sweeney - **Victoria, Australia**

Have a question about this tour? Get in touch with our staff directly.

CONTACT US




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