

## SIGNATURE TOUR

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## 2024 WHITE CHRISTMAS TOUR OF JAPAN

Ever dreamt of powder snow and perhaps making a snowman on Christmas Day? This tour is designed to travel Japan in the winter season experiencing a peaceful White Christmas as well as the traditional festive atmosphere towards the New Year in Japan.

*"This tour changed our perceptions of what group tours can offer."  
— Deborah Armour*

**DURATION**

14 days

**THEME**

Remote Japan Tours, Winter Tours

**GROUP SIZE**

Min 4 - Max 8



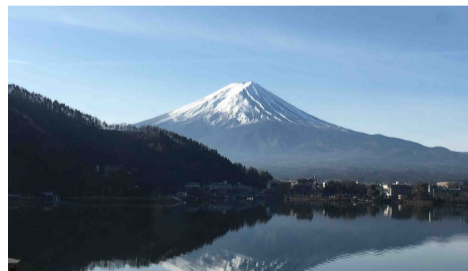
## TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

**Be mesmerized by illuminations**

At this time of the year, experience Japan literally lit up with gorgeous Christmas decorations and illuminations.

**Befriend the cute snow monkeys**

Snow monkeys are enjoying their warm soak in an hot spring area of Nagano.

**View the mighty Mt Fuji in clear winter air**

Mt Fuji, the symbol of Japan, can be seen clearest in winter at the onsen town of Kawaguchiko.

**Stroll around the historic town of Hakodate**

Hakodate has a unique history in the modernization of Japan in the 19th century.

**Enjoy snow field activities**

The activities include snowshoe walks, snow rafting, making snowman and becoming a snow angel!

**Visit Sapporo, the snow capital of Japan**

Don't miss Sapporo with all its winter charms.



[SEE FULL TOUR ITINERARY](#)

## TOUR OVERVIEW

The **2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan** is an opportunity for one of the most memorable Christmas holidays you have ever had. Be part of the cultural and traditional rituals which can be experienced only at this time of the year. Although Japanese are mostly not Christians, Japan offers much of the traditional spirit associated with Christmas.

Snow sets the scene, but the coloured lights and decorations in the streets and shops add greatly to the season. The holiday feeling is in the air as the most important holiday in Japan is only a few days away – New Year's Day.

Cities of Japan do not receive much snowfall in December. That is why we head to the mountains and the northern island of Hokkaido, to give you a **real White Christmas experience**. The snow-clad temples, shrines and Japanese castles all compete for attention with the stunning natural beauty of the countryside at this time of the year.

The **2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan** includes some of the must-see destinations such as **Snow Monkeys** playing in the hot springs; **Kawaguchiko** for the best views of **Mt Fuji**; **Takayama** and **Shirakawa-go** in picturesque deep snow; and of course **Hokkaido** for its famous powder snow and special winter experiences.

## ITINERARY

[DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY](#)

### ▼ Day 1: Arrival

Welcome to Japan! On arrival at one of Tokyo's international airports, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by public transport (train or airport coach). After a good night's sleep, you will be ready to start the first full day of your **2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan**.

 Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)

 No meals

### ▼ Day 2: Tokyo



Orientation of **Tokyo** by your guide precedes a guided tour at **Asakusa** along with **Sensoji Temple** (the oldest temple in Tokyo built in 628) and Nakamise merchant street. This old part of Tokyo retains the charms of Japan of a bygone era - a whole world away from the images of the advanced technology and modern city. These old areas are busy preparing for the New Year events and you will catch the vibe of the most important event in the Japanese calendar.

After a group lunch your guide will take you to a modern commercial district of Tokyo to show you some fascinating contrasts of old and new. December is the biggest month for retail in Japan. The beautiful window displays and shop decorations will instantly get you into the mood for this very special holiday!

In the evening, we will have a **"Welcome Japan" dinner**.

 Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### ▼ Day 3: Snow Monkey



This morning, you leave Tokyo and take **shinkansen (bullet train)** and local train into the snow country to **Yudanaka** via **Nagano** and its **Snow Monkey reserve**.

Here you will encounter the serene beauty of visiting the reserve where the Snow Monkeys live. (Note: you need to walk for around 30 minutes to get to where monkeys play.) You will never forget seeing these cute snow monkeys soaking in the hot springs.

Tonight's accommodation is in the atmospheric old onsen town of **Shibu Onsen** near the Snow Monkey reserve. A favourite pastime of the Japanese people is soaking in an onsen (mineral hot spring spa), especially in the cold season. Today, you too can enjoy soaking in a hot tub as you take in the beautiful 3,000 m class snow-capped mountains. After a **kaiseki banquet dinner**, you will be sleeping in a **Japanese style bedroom**.

 **Shibu Onsen (Shibu Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 4: Takayama via Matsumoto



On the way to your next destination, **Takayama**, you will make a brief stop at the city of **Matsumoto** today. Matsumoto's beginnings go back to the 8th century, later becoming an important castle town ruled by a powerful clan in the 1600s. Its feudal past is best exemplified today by the impressive castle that dominates the city's skyline. Your guide will take you on a tour of **Matsumoto's castle**, Japan's oldest wooden castle and one of the nation's five castles designated national treasures. The black wooden structure is a strong contrast against the white snow. To explore the castle's wooden interior, we climb to the top of its distinctive black-and-white turret.

In the afternoon, you will travel in a private minibus to Takayama.

 **Takayama (Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi no Yu or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 5: Takayama and Shirakawago



Today you will learn about the history of this central Japan's city of **Takayama**. You will visit **Jinya**, an Edo period government office when Takayama was directly controlled by the Edo shogunate government. Along the way, pausing to visit **Festival Float Museum** where ornate festival floats are kept.

In the afternoon, a private minivan takes you to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **Shirakawa-go**, in the heart of the rugged Hida region. The view of exquisite rural village features the traditional thatched-roof farm houses unique to Japan's alpine regions.

With their steeply-slanted roofs built to withstand heavy snowfalls, they resemble "hands clasped together in prayer" (hence their name, **gasshozukuri**). A walk through the village allows us to experience the magic of the farmhouses in the snow, and learn more about the construction of these houses and the traditional life of the villagers.

 **Takayama (Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi no Yu or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 6: Cooking Class and free time in Takayama



Today you will experience local life and tradition in **Takayama**. Firstly, a walking guided tour of Takayama's Edo period streetscapes, including the 200 years old **morning market**. You will then have a cooking lesson from a local lady and learn the traditional foods of the area.

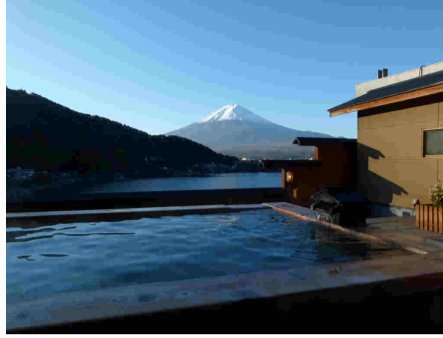
Enjoy free afternoon to pursue your personal interests such as **cycling, walking, visiting a sake brewery** or small museums to learn more about Takayama.

This evening is free for you to explore Takayama for its abundant selection of places to eat. Takayama is famous for Hida brand wagyu beef and you may like to visit one of the local restaurants serving this succulent local marbled beef.

 **Takayama (Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi no Yu or similar)**

 Breakfast, Lunch

#### ▼ Day 7: Kawaguchiko



Today you leave Takayama and the Hida region, transferring by coach and train to your next destination **Kawaguchiko**. This small town is located in the lakes district in the foothills of **Mt Fuji**. Kawaguchiko offers some breathtaking views of the majestic Mt Fuji and its lakes, and hosts a number of boutique museums and galleries.

Tonight, you will stay at a traditional Japanese inn, and sleep on a futon bedding in a tatami matted **Japanese style bedroom**. Here you have the chance to soak in a **hot-spring onsen bath** with dramatic views of Mt Fuji across the lake (weather permitting of course!).

Dinner will be a multi-course Japanese kaiseki banquet.

 **Kawaguchiko (Fuji Ginkei or similar)**
 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 8: Kawaguchiko and back to Tokyo

This morning you experience a traditional **Japanese-style breakfast** – a nutritious mix of grilled fish, miso soup, rice and pickles!

In Kawaguchiko, you will see panoramic views of Mt Fuji and the lake at the top of **Kachi Kachi Yama mountain**. A visit to **Itchiku Kubota Art Museum** is a must, where you see superb examples of kimono art using the centuries-old “shibori” tie-dyeing technique.

In the afternoon, you **circle back to Tokyo** by local coach, and prepare for the second half of your adventure in the northern island of Hokkaido. Tonight would be a great opportunity to go out and look around the beautiful Christmas illumination around your hotel, too.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)**
 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 9: Transfer to Hakodate



After a few days exploring the central **Honshu** (main island), you take a domestic flight to **Hakodate** in **Hokkaido** for the second half of **2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan**.

This historic port city with its 19th century streetscapes has a distinctly European feel. It was designated one of Japan's two foreign trade ports that could legitimately engage with foreign traders, and that foreign influence and architecture make this city so intriguing. On the guided tour of Hakodate, you will visit a number of historical sites in **Motomachi district** as well as the heritage Red Brick Warehouse district down on the waterfront (along with the beautiful harbour views). The **Ainu Museum** included in the tour provides information on the diversity by celebrating the history and culture of Hokkaido's indigenous people.

In the evening we head up **Mount Hakodate**. From the hill-side restaurant, there is a panoramic view of Hakodate all lit-up at night, considered one of the top three views in Japan.

 **Hakodate (Century Marina Hakodate)**
 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 10: Snow activities in Hakodate



This morning is all about **playing in snow!** You will head to a nearby snow field from Hakodate and try **snowshoe walking** and more great panoramic views. All the clothing and shoes are available for rent and it caters for every fitness level.

There is so much to see the **afternoon and evening are free** for you to relax in Hakodate and stroll around red brick district checking out local souvenirs and special winter food and more.

 **Hakodate (Century Marina Hakodate)**

 **Breakfast**

#### ▼ Day 11: Hakodate and transfer to Sapporo



The **Hakodate Morning Market** trades a wide array of seafood in a relatively casual environment and many small restaurants allow you to sample the local delicacies. Next is a visit to the fascinating remains of **Goryokaku Fort**. The fort was built in five-sided star shape, designed by a samurai, Takeda Ayasaburo who was influenced by a French military engineer Vauban. The fort, in the center of Hakodate, was completed in 1864 as Japan's first Western-style fortification.

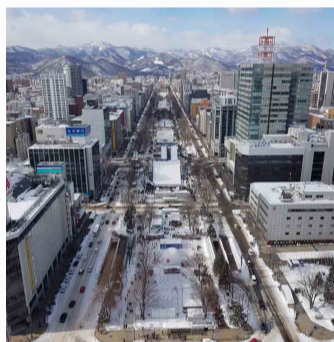
In the afternoon, you will transfer to your final destination, the capital of Hokkaido, **Sapporo**, by express train.

There is no shortage of Christmas atmosphere here. Especially the gorgeous Christmas illumination against white snow is everywhere in Sapporo.

 **Sapporo (Sapporo Grand Hotel)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 12: Sapporo



In the morning your guide will take you on a **walking tour of central Sapporo**. Your guide will help you understand the unusual story behind the development of Sapporo. You stop to have a look at the historic **Clock Tower**, a former agricultural college built in 1878. Wander past other early brick buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries on your way to **Odori Koen**, the 1.5km-long stretch of public park in the city's heart.

For lunch, you may choose to try Sapporo's most famous dish, **Sapporo ramen!** You will have some **free time this afternoon and evening**. It is Christmas Eve today. Sapporo has a great **Christmas Market** and perhaps you will find memorable souvenirs there.

 **Sapporo (Sapporo Grand Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast**

#### ▼ Day 13: Otaru



It is **Christmas Day** today, and we will start late this morning. You may like to have some peace and quiet or talk to your family back home.

There is no more desirable place to be on Christmas Day in Japan than the picturesque canal town of **Otaru**. In the afternoon, your guide will show you the charming town of Otaru. It was once a vibrant trading centre where the indigenous Ainu people, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian traders mingled to exchange goods. Otaru retains many of the grand stone and brick buildings from its late 19th century boom times. Many of the warehouses from its trading past have been converted into attractive museums and cafes along its canals. Today you wander down Otaru's iconic central canal with its Victorian-era style street lamps.

Back in Sapporo, and it is your last time to get together as a group and you will have a group **Christmas dinner**.

 Sapporo (Sapporo Grand Hotel or similar)

 Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 14: Goodbye

After breakfast, your **2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan** concludes. You can fly out of Sapporo or stay in Japan a little longer. We will be delighted to make arrangements for your personal transfer whether it is a flight to Tokyo, extra stay in Hokkaido or travel onto a different part of Japan. Please see our **Extension Model Itineraries** for inspirations.

**Note:** The cost of a transfer(s) to your departure airport are not included in our Small Group Tours to add flexibility to each guest as we find many guests choose to stay in Japan a bit longer. Please see our FAQ for more details.



 Breakfast



## DATES & PRICES

### 2024 White Christmas Tour of Japan

TOUR CODE	STARTS	DEPARTS FROM	AVAILABLE PLACES	CURRENCY	PP TWIN SHARE	SINGLE SUPPLEMENT <sup>?</sup>	
GWC-24	Dec 13, 2024	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	8,330	2,080	<a href="#">ASK A QUESTION</a> <a href="#">BOOK NOW</a>

[Wait list me for this tour](#) 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
- ✓ 13 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)
- ✓ All breakfasts



- ✓ 3 lunches (9 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 9 dinners (3 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Airport meet & greet and hotel transfer by public transport on arrival
- ✓ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans)
- ✓ Domestic flight from Tokyo to Hakodate
- ✓ Suica card pre-loaded with starter credit
- ✓ 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 be surrounded by **snow** at **Christmas time in Japan**
- ▶ Wish to experience traditional events leading up to **New Year's Day** in Japan
- ▶ Enjoy local culture in remote regions of Japan in **Honshu** and **Hokkaido** in winter
- ▶ Like to join a small group tour (maximum 8) professionally organised by a specialist tour operator
- ▶ Be up-close and **interact with locals** through public transport
- ▶ Experience a **variety in style**, and typically 4 star **boutique accommodation** with private bathroom

## REVIEWS



*The tour exceeded our expectations in every way and we would recommend it to anyone who wishes to experience a White Christmas. Although we were away from home, we experienced the Christmas spirit through all the beautiful illuminations and most of all the wonderful Christmas Eve dinner in an amazing location with delicious food. A special Christmas that we will always remember!*



Trip date: December 2023

**Judy Leigh** - Victoria, Australia



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

[CONTACT US](#)



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