

SIGNATURE TOUR

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2024 AUTUMN COLOURS SPECTACULAR TOUR OF JAPAN

One of our most comprehensive and popular trips, this tour offers you a journey of a lifetime at one of the most magical times to visit Japan – autumn!

“It was the best organised tour I have ever done...”
— Gay Buckingham



DURATION
15 days



THEME
Autumn Tours



GROUP SIZE
Min 4 – Max 8



TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



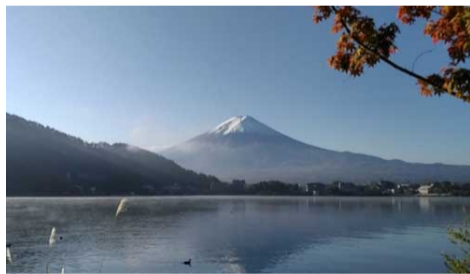
Look down on the famous Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo

Witness one of the world's busiest intersections in Shibuya atop the newest hot spot, Shibuya Sky.



Be surrounded by the best autumn colours at Nikko

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Nikko is also well known for the best autumn foliage in Japan.



Admire the mighty Mt Fuji from Five Lake District

Enjoy your first ryokan, Japanese style inn experience including onsen spa overlooking the magnificent Mt Fuji.

Stroll through manicured temple gardens in Kyoto

We will take you to carefully selected best autumn gardens in Kyoto.



Pay respect at the iconic Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima

Take your time and absorb the solemn feeling of the atomic bomb site and it's informative museum.

Stand below Dotonbori neon signs

Osaka is famous for its bigger-than-life spirit. Join in the spirit and celebrate the great memories of your holiday.



TOUR OVERVIEW

The Autumn Colours Spectacular Tour of Japan includes a great blend of Japan's 'must sees' and 'off the beaten track' sites, giving you an experience that will exceed your bucket list of expectations in Japan.

This tour takes you on a 15-day VIP journey to experience the best of Japan at autumn's peak. A carefully curated trip, taking you to experience the Japanese culture up close with its curious blend of history and modern Japan.

Your perfect introduction to Japan, with some of Japan's best tour guides who offer first-class wisdom and insights as you experience the diverse landscapes, iconic sites and many hidden treasures.

As in the most of Journey to the East group tours, this tour runs with a maximum 8 travelers which allows you to access locally owned boutique accommodation, restaurants, small temples and craft shops that large groups can't access. It travels at a reasonable pace with guided excursions in the back streets on foot.

Our most comprehensive autumn tour visiting iconic sites in Tokyo, Kyoto, Nikko, Mt Fuji, Hiroshima and Miyajima as well as providing rural experiences in Matsumoto and Takayama.

ITINERARY

[DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY](#)

▼ Day 1: Arrival in Tokyo

Welcome to Japan! On arrival at **Narita** or **Haneda International Airport**, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by an airport shuttle or Narita Express train.

Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. Your hotel is **located near glitzy Ginza** and famous **Tsukiji Market**. Why not take a stroll and relax, ready to start the first full day of your **2024 Autumn Colours Spectacular Tour of Japan**.

*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. We can arrange your additional nights accommodation at the tour hotel and pre-tour activities if you wish.

 Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo)

 No meals

▼ Day 2: Tokyo

After a brief orientation with your guide, you begin your exploration of Tokyo.

Our guided tours take full advantage of what there is to see on foot focusing on finding hidden gems as you walk through the backstreets rather than just visiting crowded famous spots in each city. In Tokyo on the first day, you visit **Marunouchi** area in between **the beautifully restored 100-year-old Tokyo Station and Imperial Palace Plaza**. Marunouchi literally means inside wall or moat, and **it was originally the inner sanctum of Edo Castle, now the Emperor's Palace**. It is the oldest and elitist office area in Japan, where all the top Japanese companies have headquarters, and a great spot to see the physical blend of history and modernity. In Marunouchi you will see;

- The Imperial Palace Plaza with **2,000 impressive black pine trees, the world away from the business district of Marunouchi**,
- Tree lined Marunouchi streets to see **impressive heritage buildings which marked the modernization of Japan in the 19th century**, and
- The red-brick façade of Tokyo Station, **one of the city's most striking pieces of architecture, against the glass and steel of neighboring skyscrapers**.

After the walking tour of Marunouchi, you will have lunch at a local restaurant rubbing shoulders with the Japanese office workers.

In the afternoon, you will experience **the bustle of Tokyo's super-efficient local trains and subway** (gently!) and see more of the action-packed side of Tokyo including Harajuku and Shibuya. You walk along the fashionable tree-lined boulevard of **Omotesando**. Here the world's super-brands sit comfortably alongside edgy Japanese designers, avant-garde architecture and Harajuku's teen pop-culture. Before going back to your hotel, you cannot miss checking out the famous **Shibuya crossing - the world's busiest intersection**.

Tonight you will get together for a welcome **dinner of modern Japanese cuisine** at a restaurant with **great night views of the worlds most populous city**.

 Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 3: Nikko

Nikko is arguably **the most popular autumn destination in Japan**. Today you will make a day visit to this **UNESCO World Heritage listed site** on Japan's impressive bullet-train – the shinkansen.



Nikko's origins go back as a mountain hermitage for a Buddhist priest in the 8th century and rose to fame in the 17th century when it was chosen as the site for the mausoleum of the powerful shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu who unified Japan in 1603.

In Nikko, you will see the stunning autumn coloured foliage and;

- Cross over the red arched **Shinkyo Bridge**, the most iconic image of Nikko,
- **Walk through an impressive avenue of giant cedar trees** at the **Toshogu** complex with its highly decorative shrine, which honours the powerful shogun, and
- Stroll along the **Kanmangafuchi Abyss** with **70 Gizo Statues**, a quiet pocket of Nikko and gorgeously photogenic in autumn.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 4: Tokyo

Today, back in Tokyo, you will visit an old part of this mega city. In 2024 Journey to the East will take you to our secret spot avoiding the crowd in Tokyo city. **Experiencing the bustle of Tokyo's super-efficient subway** you will arrive at the **old Tokyo neighborhood of Fukagawa**. Here, your **guide will explain Buddhism and Shintoism** and their relationship with everyday life of Japanese people. Highlights of this morning include:

- **Tomioka Hachiman-gu Shrine**, the biggest Hachiman Shrine in Tokyo, dedicated to the god of martial arts and war, and its connection with **the birth of sumo wrestling**,
- **Fukagawa Fudo-do**, and witness **the fire purification ritual**, and
- **Kiyosumi Teien Garden**, a small but high quality Japanese garden, notable for the use of landscaping stones imported from all over Japan.

After casual lunch at a local restaurant you will progress to **Fukagawa Edo Museum**, a well curated boutique museum, and a great place to gain knowledge of how people in the Edo Period in this area lived. Before going back to your hotel, we will show you another aspect of this area. In recent times, the area has become well known for **gourmet coffee**. We know Japanese coffee does not impress a lot of westerners, but this one will (we hope!).

Tonight is your last night in Tokyo, and you will have a chance to enjoy a dinner of your choice.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch**

▼ Day 5: Mt Fuji and Kawaguchi-ko

A **scenic train** takes you to Kawaguchiko, a town located in the **picturesque Fuji Five Lakes District** in the foothills of Mt Fuji. At Kawaguchiko, the highlights include;

- **Breathtaking views of Mt Fuji**, with the **lake and stunning autumn foliage** in foreground,
- **A local specialty lunch**, hearty noodle soup "Hoto",
- See superb examples of **kimono art using the centuries-old "shibori" tie-dyeing technique** at Itchiku Kubota Art Museum,
- **Stay in a traditional Japanese inn** (a ryokan) and sleep on the comfortable futon bedding in your traditional tatami-mat room,
- **Authentic traditional banquet for dinner**, kaiseki-style meal, and
- Soaking in an **hot spring onsen bath** with **dramatic views of Mt Fuji** across the lake. Japanese ryokan hospitality at its best!

 **Kawaguchiko (Fuji Ginkei)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 6: Matsumoto

You start the day with another new experience, a **traditional Japanese-style breakfast** – a beautifully presented and nutritious, it is an experience in its self!

Aboard an **express train**, you head for Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture, in the **heartland of the Japan Alps**. During Japan's feudal period, **Matsumoto became an important castle town** ruled by a powerful local clan. Today the city is popular for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, **galleries, and stunning alpine settings**. After arriving in Matsumoto, you will;

- Visit **Japan's oldest wooden castle**, and one of the nation's five castles designated as national treasures, the impressive **Matsumoto Castle**,
- **Walk through the well-preserved old merchant district**, Nakamachi and Nawate-Dori, to **see the Namako-walled homes**,
- Browse through shops selling **Japanese traditional crafts** and food items such as **pottery, timber ware and sake**, and
- Enjoy dinner at a small local 'Italian' **restaurant showcasing Nagano's fresh produce**.

 **Matsumoto (Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel)**

 **Breakfast (Japanese-style), Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 7: Shirakawa-go and Takayama

This morning, a private minivan will take you across an **autumn-coloured mountain pass** to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go**. You will spend a couple of hours exploring this **charming rural village surrounded by mountains and autumn colors**. The village's famous thatched-roof farmhouses are known as **gassho-zukuri** (meaning "hands clasped together in prayer"). Their steeply-slanted roofs are built to withstand the region's heavy snowfalls. You will **go inside one of the heritage houses** to study the interior and learn about their history and the life of snowbound countryside.

After a soba lunch, which this area is famous for, you will reach today's final destination, Takayama. Here, you will slide back in time as you **wander through Takayama's beautifully preserved streets of old timber merchant houses** in this most atmospheric and compact of towns – **best explored on foot by your specialist guide**.



This evening you will have another chance of staying at a **traditional Japanese ryokan**.

 Takayama (Honjin Hiranoya Bekkan or simiar)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 8: Takayama and Hida Furukawa

You set out to visit **Takayama's 200 year old Morning Market**, to check out its farm-fresh produce and handmade crafts. **Hida region** where Takayama is located retains a lot of **rural features** outside the town centre, and that is where you spend the rest of today. You will be **foraging in the fields** and enjoy a **cooking lesson from a local lady**. The rest of the day is free for you enjoy the relaxing and nostalgic Hida countryside.

 Takayama (Honjin Hiranoya Bekkan or similar)

 Breakfast, Lunch

▼ Day 9: Kyoto

This morning you will take an express train to Kyoto. **Kyoto is the cultural heart of Japan** and the guardian of many of its ancient traditions. Originally made capital in 794, present-day Kyoto offers an **endless range of ancient temples and Shinto shrines**, contemplative gardens, traditional craft shops and refined restaurants.

Upon arrival, you will **explore the historical Gion area on foot with your guide**. The guide will take you through atmospheric backstreets to discover Kyoto's traditional culture and architecture. You may spot a geisha or two on a way to their performance engagement.

 Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto)

 Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 10: Kyoto (Arashiyama)

In Arashiyama at the foot of the mountains to Kyoto's west, once again you will immerse yourself in **magnificent autumn scenery against the backdrop of exemplary temples and gardens**. Today, you will;

- Take a **rickshaw ride** to go through Arashiyama's famous **Bamboo Grove**,
- **Away from the tourist crowds**, explore deeper into rural **Sagano** and fully experience the rustic **simplicity and serenity of mountain temples**, and
- Sample Kyoto's traditional **tofu cuisine**, a local specialty which has its roots in Kyoto's Buddhist vegetarian past for lunch.

Tonight, dinner is at a shabu shabu restaurant serving wagyu beef and you have a **Maiko (apprentice geisha) join you** for a private performance. It is a unique opportunity to engage with her in person and learn more about this centuries-old art form and the life of a modern-day geisha.

 Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 11: Kyoto

Today, a minibus will take you to an **outer suburb of Kyoto** called Ohara. There are select temple gardens ablaze in autumn colors against rural and natural setting. Leaving the tourist crowd back in the central Kyoto, enjoy a leisurely stroll, fresh mountain air and magnificent fall foliage.

Back in Kyoto, you will have a **free evening** to try out an endless choice of restaurants in Kyoto. Our guide will be there to help with your selection.

 Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto)

 Breakfast, Lunch

▼ Day 12: Hiroshima

Once again onboard shinkansen, you travel to Hiroshima. The first stop is the **Peace Memorial Park** and its informative and sobering **Atomic Bomb Museum** contemplating the devastating impact of the world's first atomic bomb attack in 1945.

Despite this history, present-day **Hiroshima remains a very welcoming and vibrant city**, characterized by wide boulevards and attractive leafy parks.

After lunch, you will take a short train and **ferry ride to the island of Miyajima**. The island best known for the **vermillion-red floating torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine** (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

Tonight you will **stay on the island overnight**, and enjoy the evening quiet after the day-trippers have left and to perhaps capture a photo of the famous torii gate at sunset. Another night experience of staying at ryokan on the tour.

 Miyajima (Iwaso or similar)

 Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day13: Miyajima



First thing in a morning, before day trippers arrive, your guide will take you through the **Itsukushima Shrine**, which was originally **constructed in 593** when the island was designated a sacred island only to be inhabited by the gods. The shrine's **unique pier-like structure (which appears to float above the tides)** was restored to its present state in 1168.

Miyajima is impossibly charming and you will enjoy guided tour as well as some free time before heading to your final destination, **Osaka** by shinkansen.

Upon arrival at Osaka, you will venture out to lively **Dotonbori**, famous for its night-time neon and historic canal, and feel the bigger-than-life spirit of Osaka.

 **Osaka (Hotel Hankyu International or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 14: Osaka

Firstly, you will see its iconic sights from a different perspective onboard a **River Cruise** boat. The cruise will past the **Japan Mint, City Hall, Nakanoshima**. You will visit one of **Japan's most famous landmarks at autumn's peak - Osaka Castle**. In the afternoon, you will continue onto the downtown district of Namba and have a walking guided tour including the **'kitchen tool' street of Doguyasuji, electric goods street, and shops for modern culture like anime**. It is a **haven for those who love Japanese cuisine**. You will find anything from delicate Japanese lacquerware, to a takoyaki griddle, the perfect set of chopsticks or a high-end Japanese knife.

A **farewell Japan dinner tonight** is a teppanyaki of mouthwatering wagyu beef.

 **Osaka (Hotel Hankyu International or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 15: Bon Voyage

This morning after breakfast, your **2024 Autumn Colours Spectacular Tour of Japan** concludes. You can return to Tokyo by bullet train or depart from Osaka's Kansai International Airport. Perhaps you might like to linger in Japan for 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 Model Extension Itineraries to get some inspiration!

Note: The cost of the transfer(s) to your departure airport is not included in our Small Group Tours (as we have 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 exit airport. Please see our FAQ for more details.



 **Breakfast**



DATES & PRICES

2024 Autumn Colours Spectacular Tour of Japan



TOUR CODE	STARTS	DEPARTS FROM	AVAILABLE PLACES ?	CURRENCY	PP TWIN SHARE	SINGLE SUPPLEMENT ?		
GAC-24	Nov 04, 2024	Tokyo	Fully Booked	AUD\$	9,850	2,500	ASK A QUESTION	WAIT-LIST
GAC-24a	Nov 11, 2024	Tokyo	Fully Booked	AUD\$	9,850	2,500	ASK A QUESTION	WAIT-LIST
GAC-	Nov	Tokyo	Fully	AUD\$	9,850	2,500	ASK A	WAIT-LIST



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
- ✓ 14 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)
- ✓ All breakfasts
- ✓ 9 lunches (4 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 11 dinners (2 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Exclusive activity access
- ✓ Airport meet & greet
- ✓ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival
- ✓ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans)
- ✓ Pre-loaded Suica card
- ✓ 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).



REVIEWS



... It was the best organised tour I have ever done – and I've done a lot of other great and beautiful countries – so many of which no-one can travel to now



Trip date: November 2022

Gay Buckingham - Australia

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

CONTACT US

INFORMATION

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BLOG

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[Northern Kansai Region of Japan](#)
[Top 5 unusual things you can find in Japan](#)
[Japanese home cooking recipes Vol.5 – Okonomiyaki](#)
[Unique accommodation in Japan](#)

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