

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2025 AUTUMN TOUR OF NORTHERN JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

Start: Saturday, 18 October 2025 from Tokyo

Finish: Tuesday, 28 October 2025 at Tokyo

Duration: 11 days

Group size: 8 people

Cost estimate: AUD \$8,260 per person

Single supplement: AUD \$1,200 per person

Ref: GAN-25

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 11-Day 2025 Autumn Tour of Northern Japan takes you to the best autumn colour destinations in the Tohoku region, the northern part of Honshu Island. This Tohoku autumn itinerary is crafted specifically for this time of the year. The tour starts in Tokyo and travels to Nikko, Oirase, Lake Towada, Kakunodate, Lake Tazawa, Hiraizumi, Naruko Gorge and Matsushima.

Past guests have raved about the breathtaking beauty of Tohoku. Centuries of relative isolation have ensured tracts of unspoiled natural wilderness, unique traditions and remarkably well-preserved villages from the samurai era. This northern Japan itinerary in fall is set out to introduce you to the warm hospitality of the Tohoku people, great local food and sake, and specially selected rustic stays in onsen (mineral hot-spring spa) towns, all against the backdrop of Japan's most spectacular autumn colours. This is a perfect tour for people who like the great outdoors and travelling in less crowded places. Great for first-time visitors looking for a compact yet culturally immersive Japan experience or for repeat visitors keen to discover Japan that lies beyond the big cities.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Sat 18/10/2025	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>Welcome to Japan! On arrival at Narita or Haneda Airport, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by an airport shuttle.</p> <p>Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. Your hotel is located near the glitzy Ginza and famous Tsukiji Market. Why not take a stroll and relax, ready to start the first full day of your 2025 Autumn Tour of Northern Japan.</p> <p>*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. We can arrange your additional night's accommodation in the same room as the tour.</p>	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
2	Sun 19/10/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Nikko	<p>Leaving Tokyo by express train, your next stop is the UNESCO World Heritage-listed site of Nikko. It had its origins as the 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 powerful shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who unified Japan in 1603. A walk along an impressive avenue of giant cedar trees takes you to the highly decorated Toshogu Shrine which honours the Tokugawa shogun. There will be time to explore the extensive complex of shrine buildings enclosed within dense forests.</p> <p>On the way to your accommodation, you will take a gondola at Akechidaira that glides high above the mass of autumn colours below you.</p> <p>Tonight you will experience your first onsen, a hot mineral springs spa bath. 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.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Chuzenji Kanaya Hotel [Western style room]
3	Mon 20/10/2025	Guided tour of Nikko	<p>An authentic Japanese-style breakfast awaits this morning – a nutritious, protein-charged mix of grilled fish, miso soup, tofu, rice, and pickles!</p> <p>Nikko is arguably the most popular autumn destination in Japan. Today you will travel further into the Nikko National Park to admire the stunning autumn coloured foliage. You will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drive through Oku-Nikko (deeper Nikko) and stop to admire the natural beauty of Nikko National Park in autumn, - Enjoy the truly beautiful autumn colours against the Chuzenji Lake, and - View the dramatic 100-metre Kegon Waterfalls created when lava flows rerouted the Daiya River. <p>You will stay at Nikko one more night tonight.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Chuzenji Kanaya Hotel [Western style room]
4	Tue 21/10/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Oirase	<p>The bullet train whisks you away further north today, to Aomori, the northern most prefecture on the main island of Honshu. The next few days you explore this rugged region. Geographically remote, over centuries Aomori has developed its own distinctive folk traditions, regional foods and architecture to withstand its cold climate and snowy conditions.</p> <p>On this tour you will stay in the scenic Oirase and Lake Towada area. The area is stunning in autumn and a great spot for walkers and photographers. You'll also have another chance to soak in an onsen bath.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Towada Hotel [Western style twin room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
5	Wed 22/10/2025	Guided tour of Oirase and Lake Towada	<p>Today you will immerse yourself in beautiful Oirase and Lake Towada. Highlights include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A leisurely 7 km walk (or shorter if preferred) on the flat walkway along the stunningly picturesque Oirase River with cascading waterfalls and rapids, - Cruise Lake Towada covered in brilliant shades of red, orange and yellow, possibly one of the best views of autumn foliage on earth! <p>You'll stay one more night in Oirase and dinner will be at the hotel.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Towada Hotel [Western style twin room]
6	Thu 23/10/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Kakunodate	<p>This morning you head south in a private minibus and stop at a couple of scenic spots before arriving at today's destination Kakunodate. One of the stops is Lake Tazawa, the deepest lake in Japan . Your guide will recount some of the local folklore about the lake and the mythical spirits and demons which are said to inhabit the area.</p> <p>Kara Branch School Museum is an interesting little museum in the old school building built in 1882 and closed in 1974 due to the decline of population in this area.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, you will arrive at Kakunodate often called "Tohoku's little Kyoto". Kakunodate has the refined cultural traditions introduced from Kyoto when the town was made a vital northern stronghold in the feudal era. The samurai classes brought with them fine ceramics, cherry-bark ware and other craft traditions, which you can still see being made in Kakunodate today. While its feudal-period castle was destroyed long ago, the old samurai and merchant districts remain remarkably unchanged since the 1600s.</p> <p>For the next couple of nights, you will stay at a local boutique hotel with typical Tohoku hospitality. Tonight you will experience a soul-warming hot-pot dish "Kiritampo nabe", a specialty of the region for dinner.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tamachi Bukeyashiki Hotel [Western style twin room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
7	Fri 24/10/2025	Guided tour of Kakunodate	<p>This morning, you will explore historical Kakunodate with your guide including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One or more former samurai houses impeccably preserved to show you the life of mid to lower class samurai in Edo era, - Kakunodate craft museum where high standard local crafts are displayed, and - Little shops selling local crafts and food items such as miso and soy sauce. <p>In the afternoon, enjoy a fabulous few hours of free time wandering the atmospheric streets among the old wooden buildings of the samurai district checking out the local craft shops and restaurants. Kakunodate is framed beautifully this time of year by its trademark cherry trees covered in autumn colours.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tamachi Bukeyashiki Hotel [Western style twin room]
8	Sat 25/10/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Naruko	<p>Once again onboard a minibus, you head to the centre of the Tohoku region. The stop today is Chuzonji Temple in Hiraizumi, a historical temple founded in 850, and now designated as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties. It is well known for its Golden Hall Konjikido which is, apart from the roof, covered with gold leaf both inside and out.</p> <p>You will then explore the lovely mineral hot springs town of Naruko in the afternoon. Naruko Gorge, a spectacular ravine 100 meters deep, is a place to enjoy the dramatic mix of autumn colours.</p> <p>Tonight's accommodation is another onsen hotel where you stay in a Japanese-style room on futon bedding and enjoy a soak in an authentic hot springs bath, incredibly relaxing after a day on the road. An additional attraction of Naruko is its local craft of Kokeshi doll. You will have a chance to paint your own kokeshi doll today.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Naruko Hotel [Japanese style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
9	Sun 26/10/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Matsushima	<p>Today, you will visit a small coastal city of Shiogama. Shiogama is much quieter and visited by less tourists than nearby famous Matsushima, and a great detour, before finally arriving at Matsushima today. In Shiogama, you will;</p> <p>Visit Shiogama Shrine, an impressive complex designated Important Cultural Properties, Try Japan's famous drink, sake at a local boutique brewery, and Enjoy sushi lunch which Shiogama is famous for.</p> <p>After lunch, you will take a scenic boat to cruise down the Matsushima Bay, best known for over 250 pine tree-covered islands. Over time, sea-winds have helped to shape the pine trees and their twisted trunks silhouetted against rocky island outcrops. Matsushima is counted as one of the three most beautiful landscapes of Japan along Amanohashidate in Kyoto and Miyajima in Hiroshima.</p> <p>After arriving in Matsushima by boat, stop for a break of frothy matcha green tea and traditional sweets at a centuries-old teahouse, Kanrantei overlooking the bay.</p> <p>Your accommodation tonight has onsen bath with spectacular views of the bay. Before dinner you may like to visit the mid 17th century Zen temple Entsu-in, ablaze in autumn colour beautifully lit-up at night.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Matsushima Taikanso [Room with western beds]
10	Mon 27/10/2025	Guided tour of Matsushima and transfer to Tokyo	<p>This morning you will have a guided tour of Matsushima. During the tour, you will visit Zuiganji Temple, one of Tohoku's finest Zen temples originally built in 828. Next, you cross the evocative red-coloured bridge linking the mainland to the island of Godaido, designated a site of Important Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>Your guide will provide some background on the history of the Matsushima region and the popular daimyo lord, Date Masamune, who controlled the area in the early 1600s. Another interesting part of Japanese history is the famous 17th-century haiku poet Matsuo Basho, who also journeyed through these parts.</p> <p>You will have some free time this afternoon. Why not explore some of the islands off Matsushima which are connected by bridges. They are full of monuments and caves, the remains of the pilgrimage era.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, you will transfer from Matsushima back to Tokyo. Tonight you will gather one last time for a farewell dinner to say goodbye to your fellow travelers and talk about your memories of northern Japan - a trip you will never forget.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Tue 28/10/2025	Departure	<p>After breakfast, your 2025 Autumn Tour of Northern Japan comes to an end.</p> <p>But it doesn't have to be the end of your dream adventure! You can take a train or airport bus to Narita International Airport or Haneda Airport for your departure. Or, perhaps you would like to continue travelling 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 Model Extension Itineraries for inspiration.</p> <p>Note: The cost of an escorted 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 the airport or your next destination. Please see our FAQ for more details.</p>	Breakfast	
		Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10 nights accommodation listed above ■ Airport meet & greet and hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ Private guide throughout the tour ■ All local transport (train, bus and taxi) stated in the itinerary ■ Activities and entry fees stated in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) ■ Meals as specified 		
		Exclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Transfer on the last day ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except for the first drink) ■ Tips and gratuities (not routinely expected in Japan) ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		