

SIGNATURE TOUR

Home / Small Group Tours / 2025 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan

2025 CHERRY BLOSSOM SPECTACULAR TOUR OF JAPAN

A comprehensive Japan experience taking you on magical journey across Japan at cherry-blossom time, packed full of cultural activities and genuine immersion.

*“...To those wanting a feel for Japan I would recommend the Signature tours **as you get to travel like the locals and great but not 5 star hotels.**”*
– Colin Thorburn



DURATION
15 days



THEME
Cherry Blossom Tours



GROUP SIZE
Min 2 – Max 8



TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



Enjoy cherry-blossom time in Tokyo suburbs

Experiencing cherry-blossoms without tourists and mingling with locals at local parks



Pay respect at the iconic Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima

Cherry blossom can also be enjoyed at this internationally wellknown site in spring



Marvel the elegant combination of Japanese castles and cherry blossom

You will explore exquisite Himeji Castle and the distinctive black & white Matsumoto Castle framed by cherry blossoms – both magnificent national treasures



Soak in onsen bath

You will stay at a traditional onsen ryokan in historic Takayama and Mr Fuji region of Kawaguchiko



Immerse in the culture

Experience a traditional tea ceremony in a tea master's private home and learn about the history and philosophy of this ancient practice.

Taste Japan's diverse range of food

Tour includes meals from lively local izakaya pubs to traditional Japanese restaurants and delicious food in tiny towns.

SEE FULL TOUR ITINERARY

TOUR OVERVIEW

Our most comprehensive cherry-blossom tour, the 2025 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan truly delivers the magic of Japan at spring-time. Over 15 days, you follow a route across the country specifically chosen to reveal the explosion of soft pink colour at some of Japan's most iconic sites.

This tour will take you on a journey from Tokyo down to Hiroshima and Miyajima, then on to Osaka and the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara before travelling into Japan's alpine region. Here you visit the old samurai towns of Takayama and Matsumoto and catch views of the majestic Mt Fuji from onsen towns, before circling back to Tokyo. Along the way you will see the famous Japanese cherry blossom and venture into some the less-visited parts and neighborhoods to gain a sense of the local. To make your cherry blossom tour of Japan truly splendid you will experience unique culture and immersive activities specially created by Journey to the East.

The trip is geared towards those comfortable travelling at a reasonable pace, exploring by foot and using local transport, and having some free time to do their own discovering. The expert local guides who lead our small 8-person groups are also happy to pass on insider tips, making for an even more authentic and rewarding trip!

*From 2025 all our Small Group Tours will have guaranteed departure from 2 guests.

ITINERARY

DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY

▼ Day 1: Arrival in Tokyo

Welcome to Japan and your **2025 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan!** On arrival at one of Tokyo's international airports, you'll be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your central Tokyo hotel by airport bus or train.


Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. You might like to step out and explore the local neighborhoods around your hotel in Tokyo such as Ginza or Hibiya Park. Let us know if we can help with any suggestions.

*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. Please contact us if you'd like us to arrange additional night's accommodation in the same room as the tour.

Tokyo (Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi or similar)

No meals

▼ Day 2: Tokyo



After orientation with your guide, you begin your exploration of **Tokyo**. A dazzling metropolis characterised by soaring towers and neon, Japan's capital is also an intriguing collection of small neighbourhoods each with their own distinct flavour. As you explore the city, you'll also get beyond its surface to discover some of the local places where ordinary Tokyoites live and socialise.

Today you make good use of Tokyo's efficient train system and head to the lovely neighbourhood of **Fukagawa**. Despite being close to the business districts of central Tokyo, Fukagawa has a laid-back and serene atmosphere, characteristic of Tokyo's traditional "shitamachi," the old heart of the city. This bayside district was historically a merchant neighborhood, and it still retains an unpretentious, down-to-earth feel. At this time of the year, the area bursts into pink air of cherry blossoms along the rivers.

While you are in the area, you will visit **Kiyosumi Garden**. Originally built by a local lord in Edo period, the garden was later owned by the Iwasaki family, the founder of Mitsubishi conglomerate as a place to entertain guests and employees. It is an exemplary stroll style garden with a large pond in the middle punctuated by magnificent stones transported from all over Japan.

After a full day's exploration we head back to our hotel and a **welcome dinner** at a **local Japanese izakaya pub**.

Tokyo (Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi or similar)



 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 3: Tokyo



Today you will have a unique opportunity to get out of central Tokyo to western residential suburbs. The first stop is Koganei Park, one of the largest parks in Tokyo, popular with local families and cherry blossom viewers with 1,400 cherry trees. While you are in Koganei, you will also visit Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum, where centuries-old building are relocated and preserved on its ground.

This afternoon you explore another aspect of Japanese culture – the **Japanese tea ceremony**. It is an exclusive opportunity to spend time with a **Japanese tea master** in her own home in a Tokyo suburb – an **immersive experience** specially created by Journey to the East. The tea master will take you through the history and philosophy of the tea ceremony ritual and the steps and utensils involved in preparing the ultimate bowl of frothy matcha tea. In this relaxed and welcoming environment, you can ask all the questions you like about this ancient practice and why it remains popular today.

You head back to central Tokyo and enjoy a free evening tonight. Why not try one of the thousands of restaurants in Ginza, near your hotel. Your guide will be more than happy to make suggestions.

 Tokyo (Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi or similar)

 Breakfast, Lunch


▼ Day 4: Hiroshima



You leave Tokyo this morning onboard a **shinkansen** (super-express bullet train) to visit the iconic sites of **Hiroshima** and **Miyajima**. You visit the **Peace Memorial Park** and the sobering but informative **Peace Memorial Museum**, and contemplate the devastating impact of the world's first atomic bomb dropped in August 1945. Despite its tragic past, present-day Hiroshima remains a very welcoming and vibrant city, characterized by wide boulevards and attractive leafy parks.

In the late afternoon, you will cross to the island of Miyajima by a short train and ferry ride. You overnight on the island to enjoy the quiet after the day-trippers have gone and to capture an evocative photo of the famous torii gate at sunset. Dinner is a multi-course **kaiseki banquet** at a traditional **ryokan** – here you'll experience the elegant beauty of a tatami mat room and traditional ryokan hospitality.

 Miyajima (Iwaso or similar)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

▼ Day 5: Miyajima



Enjoy a relaxed morning and the island's ambience. This morning your guide takes you on a tour of **UNESCO-listed Itsukushima Shrine** and its famous torii gate, originally constructed in 593. Mortals were not permitted to step foot on the sacred island and could only access the shrine to perform rituals by boat, hence the unusual pier-like structure of the shrine's main building.

This afternoon, you have some free time. Perhaps hike up Mt Misen for its stunning views of the Seto Inland Sea, visit some Buddhist temples such as the intriguing Daisho-in, or simply enjoy some down time in a waterfront cafe. Why not try Miyajima's famous oysters grilled at shop fronts all over the island.

This evening you will hop back to the mainland Hiroshima, and enjoy its specialty dish **okonomiyaki**, a savoury pancake cooked on a hot plate right in front of you for dinner. You may also like to visit nearby **Shukkei-en Garden**, to admire its **cherry blossoms beautifully illuminated** at night.

 Hiroshima (Granvia Hiroshima or similar)

 Breakfast, Dinner



▼ Day 6: Himeji and Osaka





Back on the shinkansen, your next destination is **Himeji** and its magnificent World Heritage castle. Built in 1580, **Himeji Castle** is a stunning example of castle architecture, and one of the precious few original castles left in Japan. With an impressive network of defensive walls and turrets, its elegant white façade and **cherry blossoms** make it arguably Japan's most photogenic castle in spring.

The vibrant city of **Osaka** is your next stop. Japan's third largest city, Osaka's history is as long as the nation's itself, eventually becoming an important political base when one of Japan's most powerful shoguns built a formidable new castle in the 16th century. After arriving in Osaka, you have a typical Osaka soul food, crispy fried **kushiage skewers** for dinner tonight.

-  **Osaka (Intergate Osaka Umeda or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 7: Osaka



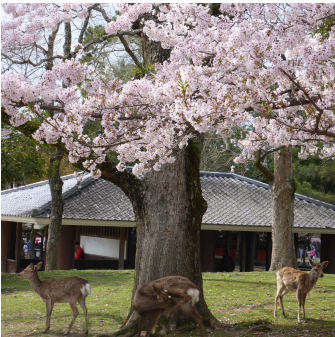
This morning you have a cruise around inner moat of the **Osaka Castle** looking up its towering stone walls, a formidable barrier to any invader. The **cherry blossom trees** which surround the castle in spring add to its spectacular effect.

In the afternoon, you have a walking tour of Osaka's lively entertainment district, Namba and Dotonbori including Doguyasuji, a kichen shop street, Kuromon Market for local fresh food, and Denki-gai, an electric goods street. At Dotonbori, under the famous giant signboards, you may like to try some street food, such as grilled **takoyaki**.

You have the evening free tonight. Osaka is very much a food-focused town and offers endless options. There's even a local expression ("kuidaore"), which means ruining yourself financially by too much good food! Chat to your guide if you'd like some recommendations.

-  **Osaka (Intergate Osaka Umeda or similar)**
-  **Breakfast**

▼ Day 8: Nara



Today you make a day-trip to **Nara**, Japan's first capital. Nara was the place where Buddhism first took hold in the 6th century, and its monumental Buddhist temples are testament to its splendid past.

Firstly, you travel deeper into the heart of Nara Prefecture and explore **Yoshino**, a mountain-side town famous for the **1,000 cherry blossom trees** which blanket the surrounding hills in pink. You'll head up the narrow main street to the higher levels, passing by some notable temples and shrines which once housed emperors, fugitive warlords and ascetic mountain priests.

In the afternoon, you visit **UNESCO-listed Todai-ji Temple**, the world's largest existing wooden structure. This majestic structure also houses one of the largest **bronze Buddha figures** in the world! The awe-inspiring statue, originally cast in 752, is flanked by two exquisitely sculptured guardian figures.

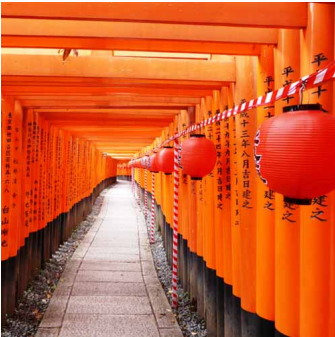
Tonight, you will arrive at your next destination – **Kyoto**, the most iconic of cities. Originally made capital in 794, Kyoto remains the cultural heart of Japan and is home to 17 **UNESCO World Heritage sites** and a wealth of traditional craft shops, museums, galleries and outstanding restaurants.

Stretch your legs with a walk along scenic Kamo River, which runs through the city's heart near your hotel, before enjoying a **traditional Kyoto meal** for dinner.

-  **Kyoto (Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 9: Kyoto





This morning, you head by private vehicle to **Fushimi Inari Shrine**, one of Kyoto's most popular attractions, and walk through a seemingly endless tunnel of **red torii gates** leading up the mountain. Originally dedicated to the gods of rice and sake, today Fushimi Inari is visited for those praying for success in business, as well as those keen to experience its magical atmosphere.

Kyoto in spring time is a joy to experience, and today you walk along the **Philosopher's Path** at the foot of the Higashiyama mountains – a picturesque canal lined by an avenue of **cherry trees** and other flowering plants.

At the end of this afternoon, you'll see a performance of **Miyako Odori**, a colourful spring-time dance spectacular performed by Kyoto's geisha community.

-  **Kyoto (Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



▼ Day 10: Arashiyama



Today is spent exploring **Arashiyama** and **Sagano** in Kyoto's western mountains. The area is known for its natural beauty, and once attracted Kyoto's nobility and literati, poets and Buddhist priests during the flourishing Heian period. That legacy has left behind some sublime temples, villas and landscaped gardens.

UNESCO-listed **Tenryu-ji** is the key attraction with its superb stroll garden which artfully utilises the mountains behind as part of its design. It's also a popular stop for its cherry blossom trees. We visit historic **Togetsu Bridge** and its scenic river and stop for a **traditional vegetarian lunch**, typical Buddhist monk fare. Arashimaya's **bamboo forest** is another popular site for its thick bamboo dappled in ethereal light. Escaping the other day-trippers, we'll walk on through quiet backstreets to **Daikakuji Temple** with its beautiful lake fringed by cherry blossom trees.

After arriving back to your hotel, it is free evening tonight.

-  **Kyoto (Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Lunch**

▼ Day 11: Takayama



It's time to explore Japan's mountain regions and today we journey by express trains to atmospheric **Takayama** in the **Japanese Alps**. Today you wander back in time through Takayama's beautifully preserved streets of old timber houses – best explored on foot. We visit **Takayama Jinya**, once the prefectural office of the Tokugawa shogunate in feudal times, and enjoy some of the early blooming cherry trees along the town's central canal.

Tonight's accommodation is one of the standouts of the trip – a luxurious **onsen ryokan inn** in a quiet part of Takayama with an **open-air onsen bath** in each of the guest rooms. Relax and rejuvenate in your own **private bath** and understand why visiting a hot spring remains one of the top past-times of the Japanese. The multi-course cuisine dinner is also a highlight, featuring delicious **Hida beef**, a Takayama specialty.

-  **Takayama (Hidatei Hanaogi or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 12: Shirakawago and Matsumoto







Start the day with an authentic **Japanese-style breakfast** – a filling and nutritious feast of grilled fish, miso soup, steamed rice and pickles.

Takayama is famous for the **Miyagawa morning market**, which is believed to have been operating for some 200 years. After viewing its crafts and farm-fresh produce, we head to the **UNESCO World Heritage site of Shirakawa-go**. We visit the famous **thatched-roof farmhouses** with their steeply-slanted roofs built to withstand the region’s heavy snowfalls and learn about their fascinating construction.

Traversing a spectacular mountain pass, we journey on by private vehicle to lovely **Matsumoto** in Nagano. Surrounded by mountains, Matsumoto’s own beginnings extend back to the 8th century, later becoming a strategically important **castle town** ruled by a powerful clan. Today the city is popular for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, historic quarter and stunning alpine setting.

This evening you will be treated with a local taiko (Japanese drum) performance and a chance to try beating the taiko yourself. Dinner is at one of the city’s acclaimed restaurants serving delicious **Italian-fusion cuisine**.

-  **Matsumoto (Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 13: Matsumoto and Kawaguchiko



This morning you visit magnificent **Matsumoto Castle**, Japan’s oldest wooden castle and one of the nation’s five castles designated a **national treasure**. Still in impeccable condition, we explore its wooden interiors and climb to the top of its distinctive black-and-white turret.

An express train trip takes you to **Kawaguchiko**, located in the lakes district at the foot of **Mt Fuji**, Japan’s tallest mountain. Kawaguchiko offers some breathtaking views of the majestic mountain and spring-time foliage. Since ancient times, Mt Fuji has been considered a sacred mountain and a place where deities are believed to reside.

Firstly, you stop for a lunch of **hearty Hoto noodles**, the region’s tasty specialty. You then visit beautiful **Sengen Shrine**, which has been a place of worship for the mountain since 745 and is marked by a beautiful red torii gate at its entrance. A stop at the **Mt Fuji World Heritage Center** tells us a little more about the mountain’s intriguing seismology and cultural significance.

Our **ryokan** tonight offers one last chance to enjoy Japan’s sublime onsen culture. The communal open-air baths overlook the lake, offering spectacular views of Mt Fuji, weather permitting of course!

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



▼ Day 14: Kawaguchiko and back to Tokyo



This morning you take the **Kachi Ropeway** above Kawaguchiko’s lake to catch views of Mt Fuji. **Itchiku Kubota Art Museum** is a great museum to see superb examples of kimono art using the centuries-old shibori dyeing technique.

Hopefully you catch the iconic view of Mt Fuji framed by cherry blossoms, before departing for Tokyo by express coach.

Back in the capital, you gather one more time for a **farewell dinner** at a modern restaurant with a great view of the city. For those who don't mind a bit of singing, join our guide and the group for a lively **karaoke session**, ending our trip in true Japan-style!

-  **Tokyo (Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 15: Goodbye in Tokyo



You check out of your hotel after breakfast and your **2025 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan** concludes.

You can take an airport express, limousine bus or chartered vehicle to one of the international airports in Tokyo. If you'd like to linger in Japan a little longer, we would be delighted to plan your personal post-tour extension to show you a different part of Japan. Please see our **Model Extension Itineraries** on Private Tour page for inspiration.

Note: The cost of an escorted transfer to your departure airport is not included in our Small Group Tours



DATES & PRICES

2025 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan

TOUR CODE	STARTS	DEPARTS FROM	AVAILABLE PLACES ?	CURRENCY	PP TWIN SHARE	SINGLE SUPPLEMENT ?		
GSS-25	Mar 24, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	11,020	3,290	ASK A QUESTION	BOOK NOW
GSS-25a	Mar 31, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	11,020	3,290	ASK A QUESTION	BOOK NOW

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
- ✓ 14 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)
- ✓ All breakfasts
- ✓ 7 lunches (6 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 10 dinners (3 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Airport meet & greet on arrival
- ✓ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival
- ✓ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans)
- ✓ Pre-loaded transport IC 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).

WHO THIS JAPAN TOUR IS FOR...

This is a perfect tour for people who:

- ▶ Want to visit the best locations on the Honshu Island of Japan at **cherry blossom time**
- ▶ Wish to cover all the “**must visit**” places of Japan in 15 days
- ▶ Enjoy the guidance of **professional tour guides** as well as some **free time**
- ▶ Like extra small group tours **designed with healthy 55+** travelers in mind
- ▶ Be up-close and **interact with locals** through public transport
- ▶ Experience a **variety in style**, and typically 4+ star **boutique accommodation** with private bathroom including some traditional ryokan

REVIEWS



66

The team at Journey to the East provide an exceptional experience for understanding the customs, culture, cuisine and curiosity that is to be found in Japan.

★★★★★

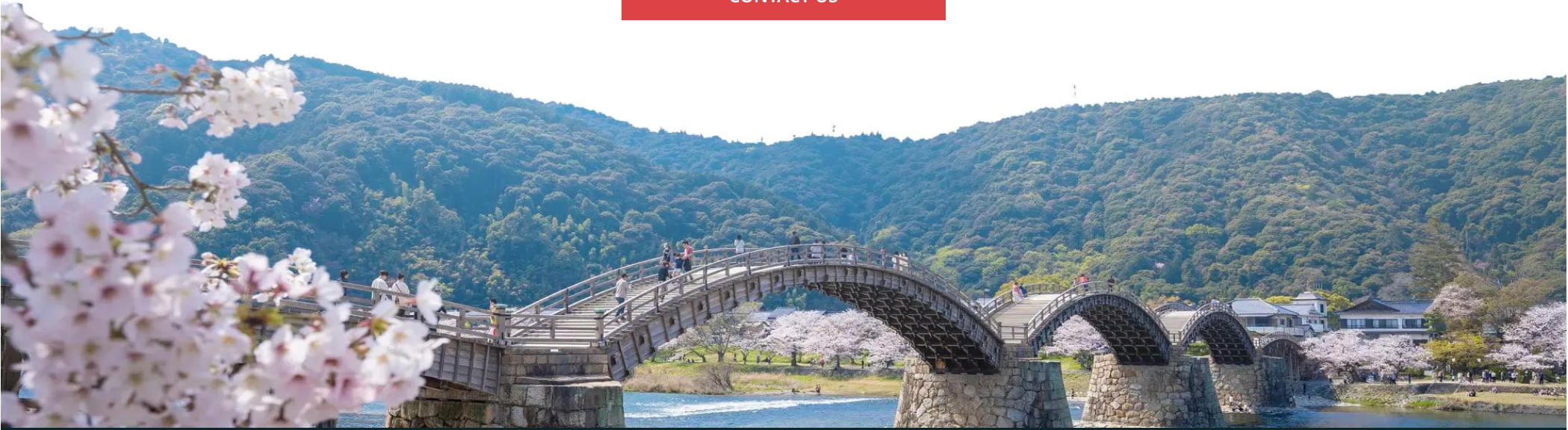
Trip date: March 2023

David Lyon - Western Australia



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

CONTACT US



INFORMATION

About UsVisiting JapanFAQsBlogContact Us

BLOG

- Choosing the right tour of Japan
- 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

CONTACT US

- +61 7 3368 1966
- Haig Road, Auchenflower 4066 Queensland Australia

