

## COMFORT TOUR

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## 2025 CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR OF JAPAN – CLASSIC ROUTE

The ultimate bucket-list tour of Japan's must-see sights in spring – temples, castles and gardens set against a stunning backdrop of pink blossoms – for those who prefer a little comfort in their travel style

*"We enjoyed quality accommodation, excellent food, professional guidance and a varied itinerary with a small group."*

– Greer Dobbs



**DURATION**  
13 days



**THEME**  
Cherry Blossom Tours



**GROUP SIZE**  
Min 2 – Max 8



## TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



### Walk around temple gardens in Kamakura

Enjoy light walks around splendid gardens at the relaxed seaside former capital



### Explore the sacred island of Miyajima

Enjoy the iconic site over two days, a great opportunity to take amazing photos at sunset and early morning



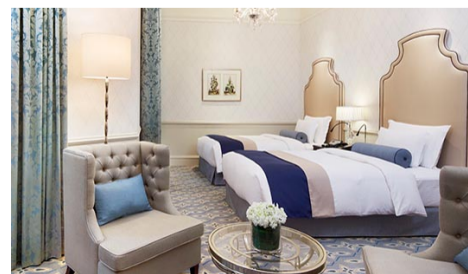
### Visit the mighty Himeji Castle

The castle dubbed as "White Heron Castle" because of its brilliant white exterior shines against pink cherry blossom



### Mt Fuji and Hakone

Very relaxing onsen resort town of Hakone is a great place to enjoy arts, nature and views of Mt Fuji





**Take a rickshaw ride through bamboo groves**

Glide through the famous bamboo forest of Arashiyama on the back of rickshaw

**Stay in hand-picked boutique accommodation**

Stay in locally managed hotels, avoiding large international chain hotels

[SEE FULL TOUR ITINERARY](#)

## TOUR OVERVIEW

**The 2025 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan – Classic Route has been specifically designed as a once-in-a-lifetime trip to experience Japan’s most iconic sights as the delicate cherry blossoms hit their peak. With a focus on luxury accommodation, private transport and a relaxed travel pace, it truly offers the ultimate tour of this captivating country in spring!**

This 13-day Japan cherry blossom trip takes you on a comprehensive journey across the country, including the dazzling metropolis of Tokyo, the ancient capital of Kyoto with its treasure-trove of UNESCO sites, welcoming Hiroshima and the sacred island of Miyajima, and the onsen resort of Hakone at the foot of Mt Fuji. In between, we make special excursions to some of Japan’s less-visited corners and local neighbourhoods and offer some exclusive experiences to deliver a truly authentic trip where the real Japan comes to life.

Available to just 8 guests, this is a perfect option if you’re looking for a fully-organised trip where all your transport and almost all your meals are covered, where you stay at superb hand-picked hotels, and benefit from the warm personalised attention and deep knowledge of our expert tour guides.

\*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 Tour of Japan – Classic Route**. On arrival at one of Tokyo’s international airports, you’ll be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your Tokyo hotel by **private transfer**.

Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. Stretch your legs if you like and explore the local neighbourhood around your hotel, which is the boutique **Tokyo Station Hotel**, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, located in an elegantly restored a-century-old Tokyo Station building. You’ll be staying here for three nights, which will help you ease into the trip and recover from any jet-leg.

\*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 (Tokyo Station Hotel or similar)

 No meals

### ▼ Day 2: Tokyo



After orientation with your guide, you begin your exploration of **Tokyo**. A dazzling ultra-modern metropolis, Tokyo is also steeped in great history. Today you experience both the traditional and contemporary sides of Japan’s captivating capital.

You travel by **private vehicle** to the old neighbourhood of **Asakusa**, and get a sense of days gone by. Asakusa is also home to Tokyo’s oldest temple, venerable **Sensoji** with its iconic **Kaminari-mon Gate** and **Nakamise street stalls**.

Next, you head across town for a **lunch** in beautiful **Shinjuku Gyoen Park**, originally an imperial retreat but now one of Tokyo’s top destinations for **cherry blossom viewing**. For a taste of Tokyo’s fashionable heart, you journey onto neighbouring **Shibuya** and the observation deck of the **Shibuya Sky** for its spectacular views. Watch the crowds far below as they navigate **Shibuya Scramble**, Japan’s busiest intersection, and spot major landmarks such as Tokyo Tower and SkyTree, and on clear days Mt Fuji in the distance.

After a busy first day, you return to the hotel, and after some rest, gather for a relaxed **welcome dinner** of modern **Japanese degustation cuisine**.

 Tokyo (Tokyo Station Hotel or similar)

 Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### ▼ Day 3: Kamakura





Today you briefly leave Tokyo for **Kamakura**, an ancient capital from early feudal times. Nestled among rolling hills on Tokyo Bay, Kamakura is home to some of the country's best **Zen Buddhist temples**. You visit the magnificent **Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu**, a shrine designed to impress with an imposing promenade flanked by pine trees, built by a powerful warlord in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Wander through some backstreets and stop for a **buckwheat soba noodle** lunch. Later you visit a quiet temple **teahouse**, set amongst a lovely bamboo forest, and enjoy a freshly whisked bowl of **matcha tea** with some traditional sweets.

Then it's back to Tokyo by private vehicle for a group dinner at a local **izakaya** (Japanese-style pub).

 **Tokyo (Tokyo Station Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 4: Hiroshima



Leaving Tokyo behind, you settle into the comfortable first-class seats of Japan's gleaming **shinkansen** (super-express bullet train) and journey to **Hiroshima**. Here you visit the **Peace Memorial Park** and its sobering but informative **Museum**, and contemplate the devastating impact of the world's first atomic bomb dropped on the fateful day in August 1945.

Later take a short **ferry** ride to the sacred island of **Miyajima**, one of Japan's top scenic spots. It's best known for the vermillion-red **floating torii gate**, a designated **UNESCO World Heritage site**. You stay two nights on the island to fully enjoy Miyajima's island ambience, particularly after the day-trippers have gone. Early evening is a perfect time to take an evocative photo of the torii gate at sunset.

Enjoy the stylish Japanese aesthetic of your hotel, and perhaps try the communal **onsen bath** for your first taste of Japan's renown hot spring culture – a quintessential part of any Japan experience!

 **Miyajima (Miyajima Villa or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 5: Miyajima



Accompany your guide in the morning, before the tourists arrive, on a tour of UNESCO World Heritage listed **Itsukushima Shrine** and its floating torii gate. The shrine was originally constructed in 593 when the island was designated a sacred island for the gods. Mortals were not permitted to step on the island and could only access it by boat to perform rituals, hence the unusual pier-like structure of the shrine's main building.

Later in the morning, you have time to enjoy the island in your own way. Perhaps catch the ropeway up to **Mt Misen** for breathtaking views across the Seto Inland Sea, which stretches all the way to Shikoku. Or visit the island's Buddhist temples and pavilions such as **Daisho-in**. Alternatively simply enjoy some down time relaxing at one of the island's cafes and watching the people (and the wild protected deer!) as they wander by. Your guide will be happy to offer suggestions and assistance if needed.

Dinner is modern Japanese cuisine, set in a beautifully restored traditional house in a quiet backstreet. The restaurant specializes in local produce, sourcing the best ingredients from fertile lands and waters around Miyajima.

 **Miyajima (Miyajima Villa or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 6: Himeji and Kyoto







It's back to Hiroshima this morning to board the shinkansen for the exquisite ancient capital of **Kyoto**. On the way, we make a stop at **Himeji Castle**, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built in 1580, the fortress is a magnificent example of castle architecture and one of the precious few original castles left in Japan. Extensive in scale with an impressive network of defensive walls and moats, its elegant white façade and **cherry blossoms** make it arguably Japan's most photogenic castle in spring!

You hop back on the shinkansen for the short ride to Kyoto. Originally made capital in 794 before power transferred to Tokyo some 1,000 years later, Kyoto remains the cultural heart of Japan. It is home to a staggering **17 UNESCO sites** and a wealth of traditional craft shops, museums, galleries and outstanding restaurants.

After checking into your hotel in the heart of Kyoto's Gion district, you have time to relax before you gather for a dinner. You'll spend four nights here, allowing you to enjoy a slower pace mid-trip and get to know the local neighbourhood.

 **Kyoto (The Celestine Kyoto Gion or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 7: Kyoto



Your day starts with a relaxed stroll along the **Philosopher's Path**, a pedestrian path which follows a picturesque canal lined with cherry blossom trees. You visit one of the most interesting temples in this area – the enchanting **Ginkakuji** (Silver Pavilion) built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and UNESCO-listed. Its artful raked gravel garden is a standout and a hallmark of Zen temple design.

Lunch is **traditional yudofu cuisine**, featuring the silky tofu for which Kyoto is famous.

In the afternoon, you visit magnificent **Sanjusangendo**, well-known for its 1001 statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. The 120-meter temple hall is Japan's longest wooden structure and the name Sanjusangendo (literally "33 intervals") derives from the number of intervals between the building's support columns, a traditional method of measuring the size of a building. In the center of the main hall sits a large, wooden statue of a 1000-armed Kannon that is flanked on each side by 500 statues of human sized 1000-armed Kannon standing in ten rows. Together they make for an awesome sight.

The day ends in a riot of gorgeous colour as Kyoto's geisha community perform the annual **Miyako Odori** – a dance spectacular accompanied by traditional music.

 **Kyoto (The Celestine Kyoto Gion or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

#### ▼ Day 8: Arasahiyama



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 the 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 in the area, 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. You visit historic **Togetsu Bridge** and its scenic river and stop for a **shojin-ryori lunch**, traditional vegetarian fare eaten by Buddhist monks.

Arashimaya's **bamboo forest** is another popular sight for its thick bamboo dappled in ethereal light. Escaping the other day-trippers, you'll take a **rickshaw ride** through quiet backstreets and stop at **Daikakuji Temple** with its beautiful lake fringed by cherry trees.

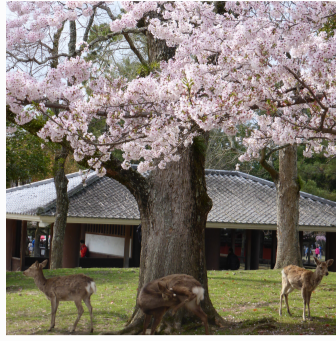
Back in central Kyoto, another group dinner that reflects Kyoto styles.

 **Kyoto (The Celestine Kyoto Gion or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



## ▼ Day 9: Nara



Today you step back further into old Japan and make a day-trip by **private vehicle** to timeless **Nara**, Japan's first capital. Nara was the place where Buddhism first took hold in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and its monumental Buddhist temples are testament to its splendid past.

You start with a tour of UNESCO-listed **Todai-ji Temple**, the world's largest existing wooden structure. If that's not enough, the majestic structure 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.

You walk on to **Nara Park**, an extensive parkland full of Buddhist sites and grazing deer, and stop by Nara's other star attraction, **Kasuga Taisha Shrine**. Also UNESCO listed, this ancient shrine is celebrated for its grand approach lined with **hundreds of stone lanterns** and the **gilded hanging lanterns** decorating its main shrine building.

Back in Kyoto, you have the evening free. Perhaps stroll atmospheric Ponto-cho in the evening lantern light illuminating cherry trees, and stop for a craft whisky or enjoy Kyoto's famed obanzai cuisine. Have a chat to your guide for recommendations.

 **Kyoto (The Celestine Kyoto Gion or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch**

## ▼ Day 10: Hakone



You farewell Kyoto today and head north by shinkansen to **Hakone**, a **scenic hot springs resort area** located in the mountains near **Mt Fuji**. With its proximity to Tokyo, Hakone has been a popular destination for Tokyoites seeking rest and rejuvenation for centuries.

Over the next two days you stay at one of Hakone's premium boutique **hot spring hotels**. Featuring private onsen baths within each room as well as large communal baths, you'll experience Japan's onsen culture firsthand and understand why an onsen visit remains one of the top past-times of the Japanese.

You tour the general Hakone region by private vehicle, travelling through the **Izu-Hakone National Park** and, depending on the weather, catching glimpses of Mt Fuji up close. Hakone has some outstanding world-class **museums and galleries** and we'll visit the **Hakone Open-Air Museum** with its amazing outside sculptures.

Lunch is at the delightful **Fujiya Hotel**, Japan's oldest western-style hotel which has been welcoming guests from around the world since 1878.

Our hotel will serve a **kaiseki multi-course banquet** of beautifully presented fresh local produce for dinner.

 **Hakone (Tensui Saryo or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

## ▼ Day 11: Hakone



Your exploration of Hakone continues with a visit to scenic **Lake Ashi** and a cruise onboard the Viking ship that plies the lake. Don't miss the classic photo shot of the floating red torii gate as you cruise by. You also visit Narukawa Art Gallery for a collection of Japanese style fine art.

Hakone's latent geothermal activity can be experienced firsthand at **Owakudani** (or Great Boiling Valley), formed when a mountain collapsed some 3,000 years ago. Today great steams of sulphide can be seen from the boiling hot pools, making for a spectacular (and rather smelly) experience!

You return to the hotel for dinner and another relaxing onsen bath.

 **Hakone (Tensui Saryo or similar)**





 Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 12: Tokyo

You arrive back in **Tokyo** by shinkansen today, and check into our **boutique hotel** located in the city's heart.

You have the afternoon free to enjoy Tokyo as you like. Located near the hotel, consider visiting Ginza's central boulevard with its department stores, brand stores and specialty shops and polished feel. Make sure you visit the basement food hall of one of its department stores – you'll be impressed by the range of beautifully presented food and confectionery. Ginza's side streets are also worthwhile exploring, lined with pretty willow trees and tiny galleries, boutiques, and some nice cafes.

Tonight you gather one last time for a **farewell dinner** at a restaurant serving up a sophisticated modern Japanese cuisine.

 Tokyo (Tokyo Station Hotel or similar)

 Breakfast, Dinner

▼ Day 13: Goodbye in Tokyo

Check out of your hotel after breakfast and your 2025 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan – Classic Route 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 as we found many guests choose to stay in Japan a bit longer. However, we would be happy to arrange your transfer to your next destination or your departing airport. Please see our FAQ for more details.



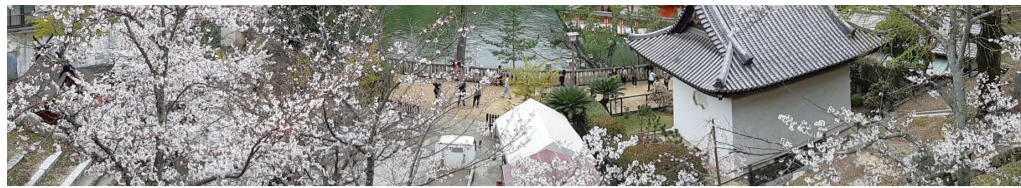
## DATES & PRICES

### 2025 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan – Classic Route

TOUR CODE	STARTS	DEPARTS FROM	AVAILABLE PLACES <small>?</small>	CURRENCY	PP TWIN SHARE	SINGLE SUPPLEMENT <small>?</small>		
GSL-25a	Mar 26, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	13,250	4,500	<a href="#">ASK A QUESTION</a>	<a href="#">BOOK NOW</a>
GSL-25	Mar 19, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	13,250	4,500	<a href="#">ASK A QUESTION</a>	<a href="#">BOOK NOW</a>

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 with western beds)
- ✓ All breakfasts
- ✓ 7 lunches (4 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 10 dinners (1 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Airport meet & greet
- ✓ Hotel transfer by private transport on arrival
- ✓ All local transport (Green Class seat on shinkansen, 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).

Weeping cherry blossom tree at a temple garden in Kyoto

## WHO THIS JAPAN TOUR IS FOR...

This is a perfect tour for people who:

- ▶ Want to be in Japan at the peak of **cherry blossom**
- ▶ Wish to cover **must-visit** cities at **slower pace** (multiple days in each location)
- ▶ Enjoy comfortable accommodation (4 star +) including **ryokans but all with western beds**
- ▶ Prefer an fully organised and escorted tour with all **activities and most meals included**
- ▶ Like the use of **minivan** which gives you greater access and comfort
- ▶ Like extra small group tours **designed with healthy 55+** travelers in mind

## REVIEWS







*Journey to the east takes care of their customers. They choose accom  
I couldn't fault their excellent coordination and planning. Thank you.  
Japan and it will be with them.*



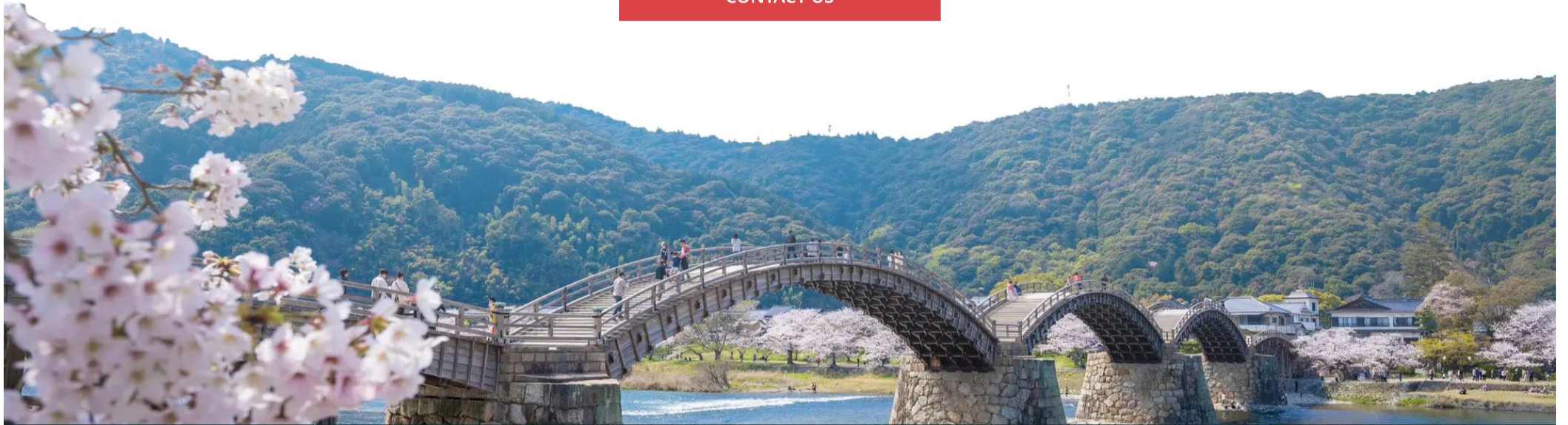
Trip date: March 2023

**Valerie Thompson** - NSW, Australia



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

[CONTACT US](#)




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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](#)

### CONTACT US

 +61 7 3368 1966

 Haig Road, Auchenflower 4066 Queensland Australia

