

## BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

### 2026 AUTUMN TOUR OF JAPAN'S WILD WEST (DISCOVERY)

**Start:** Tuesday, 10 November 2026 from Tokyo  
**Finish:** Saturday, 21 November 2026 at Kyoto  
**Duration:** 12 days  
**Group size:** 8 people  
**Cost estimate:** AUD \$9,950 per person  
**Single supplement:** AUD \$1,400 per person  
**Ref:** GAW-26

#### TOUR OVERVIEW

##### Experience Rural Japan in Autumn - Far from the Crowds

Step off the tourist trail and immerse yourself in the stunning, uncrowded landscapes of Japan's central highlands and Japan Sea coast. This 12-day autumn tour of western Japan is crafted for mature travellers who appreciate authentic experiences, spectacular scenery, and cultural depth - far beyond the typical sightseeing routes.

From the dramatic alpine beauty of Kamikochi and the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route to the spiritual serenity of Eihei-ji Zen Temple and the wild coastal cliffs of Tojinbo, this itinerary uncovers a Japan few travellers ever see. You'll explore pristine countryside ablaze in vibrant fall colours, charming towns, and meaningful heritage sites that reveal the quieter soul of Japan.

Join us in autumn 2026 and experience the true heart of rural Japan - where golden forests, mountain air, and timeless traditions await.

\*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Tue 10/11/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>Upon arrival at Narita or Haneda Airport, you'll be warmly welcomed by a Journey to the East guide and assisted onto an airport shuttle to your hotel in Tokyo.</p> <p>Today is a flexible arrival day with no scheduled group activities, giving you time to rest after your flight. Your hotel is conveniently located in the lively neighbourhood of Ueno, known for its vibrant Ueno Park, the Tokyo National Museum, and the charming Okachimachi shopping streets - all within easy walking distance.</p> <p>Take the afternoon to relax or explore at your own pace as you prepare to begin your 2026 Autumn Tour of Japan's Wild West tomorrow.</p> <p>Many of our guests choose to arrive a day or two early to adjust to the</p>	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Ueno [Standard Twin]

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			time zone and enjoy a more relaxed start. If you're a first-time visitor to Japan, we highly recommend taking time to discover Tokyo before the tour begins. We're happy to arrange extra nights in the same hotel room (subject to availability).		
2	Wed 11/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Matsumoto	<p>This morning, board the shinkansen (bullet train) followed by a scenic express train ride to Matsumoto, nestled in the foothills of the Japan Alps in Nagano Prefecture. Once a strategic castle town during Japan's feudal era, Matsumoto is now known for its relaxed, cultured atmosphere, impressive alpine backdrop, and thriving local arts scene.</p> <p>On arrival, visit one of Japan's most treasured historic landmarks - Matsumoto Castle, the oldest surviving wooden castle in the country and one of only five designated National Treasure Castles. With its striking black-and-white exterior and beautifully preserved interiors, the castle offers a fascinating glimpse into samurai-era Japan. You'll have the chance to climb to the top of the turret and enjoy panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains.</p> <p>Later, enjoy a guided stroll through the charming historic streets of Matsumoto before gathering with your fellow travellers for a special "Welcome to Japan" dinner at a local restaurant.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel [Deluxe Double/Twin]
3	Thu 12/11/2026	Guided tour of Kamikochi	<p>This morning, travel by private minibus into the heart of the Japan Alps to reach one of the country's most breathtaking natural settings - Kamikochi, whose name means "where the gods descend." Surrounded by dramatic peaks over 3,000 metres high, this remote alpine valley is a true highlight of the tour - especially in the vibrant colours of autumn.</p> <p>Enjoy a leisurely guided walk along elevated boardwalks and forest trails that wind through clear mountain streams, mossy ponds, and untouched beech and birch forests cloaked in brilliant autumn foliage. The peaceful landscape, mirrored in still waters, invites reflection and awe.</p> <p>Tonight, stay in a comfortable mountain lodge nestled in the valley. Your private room includes a toilet, while bathing is in the hotel's communal bath, a traditional feature of mountain stays in Japan. In the evening, enjoy a generous buffet dinner featuring seasonal local produce, served in a relaxed, casual atmosphere.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	The Parklodge Kamikochi [MUKU2 Twin room with with shared bathroom]

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4	Fri 13/11/2026	Guided tour of Shinano Omachi	<p>After your refreshing nature walks in Kamikochi, today offers a more relaxed pace as you continue travelling by private minibus toward Shinano Omachi, the gateway to the spectacular Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route.</p> <p>Along the way, enjoy several scenic stops at vantage points overlooking the Japan Alps, where you can take in sweeping views of the dramatic peaks and valleys that define this region.</p> <p>Upon arrival in Shinano Omachi, a quiet mountain town once thriving as a post town along an Edo-period trade route, you'll explore its charming streets and hidden corners on a guided afternoon walking tour. Though small, the town offers delightful surprises - traditional architecture, local crafts, and a peaceful, timeworn atmosphere.</p> <p>For lunch, enjoy a local specialty noodle dish at a quaint, locally loved restaurant - a perfect taste of the region.</p> <p>Tonight, unwind at a well-appointed alpine resort hotel, featuring comfortable Western-style rooms, an onsen bath, and even an indoor pool - ideal for relaxing and rejuvenating before tomorrow's alpine adventure.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	ANA Holiday Inn Resort Shinano-omachi Kuroyon [Superior Twin with balcony]

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5	Sat 14/11/2026	Guided tour of Tateyama/Kurobe	<p>Today is one of the most exhilarating and scenic highlights of the tour - an action-packed journey along the legendary Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route, crossing the Japan Alps from Shinano Omachi to Toyama City.</p> <p>This remarkable day involves a multi-modal adventure, as you traverse mountains and gorges by train, bus, cable car, ropeway, and even a trolley bus, all designed to give you up-close views of some of Japan's most dramatic alpine landscapes.</p> <p>Along the way, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit Mount Tateyama, one of Japan's most sacred Shinto peaks,</li> <li>- Walk across the impressive Kurobe Dam, an engineering marvel,</li> <li>- Explore the stunning Tateyama Caldera, Japan's largest non-active volcanic crater,</li> <li>- Take in the grandeur of snow-capped peaks and vibrant autumn foliage, and</li> <li>- Enjoy short walks and photo stops throughout the day.</li> </ul> <p>This immersive experience through ever-changing elevations and ecosystems truly captures the essence of the 2026 Autumn Tour of Japan's Wild West.</p> <p>By late afternoon, you'll arrive in Toyama City, located on the coast of the Japan Sea. The evening is yours to relax or explore - a perfect chance to sample Toyama's celebrated regional cuisine, including fresh local seafood and excellent sake from the region's famed breweries.</p>	Breakfast	Hotel JAL City Toyama [Superior Twin]
6	Sun 15/11/2026	Guided tour of Kurobe Gorge	<p>This morning, board the charming "Torokko Train" for a ride through the dramatic beauty of Kurobe Gorge, Japan's deepest river valley. Originally built to transport workers constructing the massive Kurobe Dam, this nostalgic narrow-gauge railway now offers one of Japan's most scenic journeys - especially stunning in autumn.</p> <p>The open-air vintage carriages wind through steep ravines, over trestle bridges, and past waterfalls and forests ablaze with vibrant autumn leaves. Along the way, you'll disembark for a walk along the gorge, where you'll breathe in the crisp mountain air and capture striking photos of the colourful, rugged landscape.</p> <p>In the evening, check in to a traditional Japanese ryokan in Unazuki Onsen, a quiet hot spring town nestled in the mountains. After a relaxing soak in the onsen bath, enjoy a beautifully presented kaiseki dinner, a refined multi-course meal showcasing the best of seasonal local ingredients.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Unazuki Onsen Enraku [Japanese style room with futon beddings and view of Kurobe Gorge]

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7	Mon 16/11/2026	Guided tour of Shogawa Valley and Gokayama	<p>After breakfast, you travel by private minibus through the vibrant mountain landscape to the breathtaking Shogawa Valley, where the slopes are ablaze with autumn colours. To fully appreciate the scale and serenity of the landscape, enjoy a peaceful river cruise along the Shogawa River, gliding past sheer cliffs and hillsides cloaked in fiery foliage.</p> <p>Next, visit Inami, a town renowned for its exquisite wood-carving tradition that dates back to the 17th century. At the local wood-carving centre, watch skilled artisans at work, transforming blocks of wood into detailed sculptures. Then, see these techniques brought to life at Zuisenji Temple, where intricate carvings decorate one of Japan's finest examples of wood-carved temple architecture.</p> <p>In the afternoon, your minibus winds into the mountains toward Gokayama, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed village famous for its gassho-zukuri farmhouses - steep thatched-roof homes built to withstand the region's heavy snowfalls. Tonight, stay in one of these preserved, original homes and experience true Japanese rural hospitality.</p> <p>Dinner is a home-style Japanese meal, prepared with local ingredients and shared in the cosy, communal setting of the farmhouse.</p> <p><i>Please note: Rooms are private, but bathroom facilities are shared in traditional style. The authentic atmosphere and warm local hospitality more than make up for the simplicity of the accommodation.</i></p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Gassho Minshuku (Japanese style B&B) Nakaya [Japanese style room with shared facility]

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8	Tue 17/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>After a warm and homemade Japanese-style breakfast at your traditional minshuku in Gokayama, you travel by private minibus to the coastal city of Kanazawa, located on the western edge of Honshu along the Sea of Japan.</p> <p>Upon arrival, embark on a guided tour of Kanazawa, a beautifully preserved city with deep roots in samurai heritage and Edo-period prosperity. Once a wealthy castle town under the rule of the Maeda clan, Kanazawa is rich in cultural legacy and architectural elegance.</p> <p>The city boasts an exceptional collection of historic districts, artisan workshops, and cultural landmarks. A highlight of your visit is Kenrokuen Garden, often regarded as one of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan, renowned for its harmonious design, seasonal beauty, and tranquil atmosphere.</p> <p>This evening, indulge in a premium wagyu beef Teppanyaki dinner, where your meal is expertly prepared in front of you by a skilled chef - an entertaining and delicious way to end the day.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	INTERGATE Kanazawa [Superior Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
9	Wed 18/11/2026	Guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>This morning, continue your exploration of Kanazawa with a guided tour of the Nagamachi Samurai District, where narrow stone lanes, traditional earthen walls, and preserved residences offer an atmospheric glimpse into the life of Kanazawa's elite warrior class.</p> <p>Next, wander through the lively Omicho Market, a bustling hub of fresh seafood, local produce, and Kanazawa's famed culinary specialties. It's an ideal place to experience local life and perhaps sample a few seasonal treats.</p> <p>The afternoon and evening are free for you to explore Kanazawa at your own pace. A highly recommended option is a visit to the Higashi Chaya Geisha District, where beautifully preserved teahouses and traditional wooden facades transport you to a bygone era. Step inside a historic teahouse, enjoy a cup of matcha, or browse exquisite handcrafted souvenirs.</p> <p>Kanazawa is also a celebrated centre for traditional Japanese arts and crafts. You may wish to visit local galleries or artisan workshops featuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kaga Yuzen - delicately hand-dyed kimono textiles,</li> <li>- Kutaniyaki - vividly coloured porcelain unique to the region, and</li> <li>- Wajima-nuri lacquerware - elegant, durable pieces made with centuries-old techniques.</li> </ul> <p>The city's boutique shops, craft studios, and modern museums offer a perfect blend of old and new for culturally curious visitors.</p> <p>For dinner, you might like to try one of Kanazawa's refined restaurants featuring regional Kaga cuisine, sushi, or creative interpretations of local seafood and mountain vegetables.</p>	Breakfast	INTERGATE Kanazawa [Superior Twin]

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10	Thu 19/11/2026	Guided tour of Fukui	<p>Today, you journey further west along the scenic Japan Sea coast to Fukui Prefecture, one of Japan's most tranquil and least populated regions. Here, wild natural landscapes meet profound spiritual heritage.</p> <p>Highlights of the day include:</p> <p>The dramatic Tojinbo Cliffs, where jagged volcanic rock formations plunge into the sea, create a spectacular and rugged coastline perfect for photography and quiet contemplation, and</p> <p>The vast Eihei-ji Temple complex, a serene Zen Buddhist monastery with some 70 historic buildings nestled deep in the forest. Founded in the 13th century, Eihei-ji remains an active training centre for monks and offers a glimpse into traditional Buddhist life.</p> <p>Enjoy lunch at a newly established local restaurant overlooking beautiful countryside, serving fresh regional cuisine.</p> <p>Tonight, you will stay at a shukubo - a temple lodging where pilgrims have rested for centuries. Here, you can experience authentic Buddhist vegetarian meals for dinner and breakfast, prepared with seasonal ingredients, and (optionally) participate in the unforgettable early morning meditation service at Eihei-ji, a moving spiritual experience available exclusively to guests.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hakujukan [Japanese Western Room]
11	Fri 20/11/2026	Guided tour of Fukui and transfer to Kyoto	<p>This morning, journey deeper into the sacred mountains to a tranquil temple nestled in a remote mountain hamlet. Here, you will have the rare opportunity to participate in a Buddhist meditation session, experiencing firsthand the serene practice that has been part of Japan's spiritual tradition for centuries.</p> <p>After a peaceful lunch, travel by private minibus to the city of Echizen, renowned for its exceptional knife-making heritage. Visit a long-established local knife factory where you will watch skilled artisans forge razor-sharp blades using traditional methods handed down through generations.</p> <p>In the afternoon, board an express train to Kyoto, Japan's cultural heart. Upon arrival, take a guided stroll through the atmospheric streets of Gion, famous for its historic architecture, teahouses, and geisha culture.</p> <p>Tonight, gather for your "Farewell Japan" dinner, a special meal to celebrate the memories and friendships forged during your remarkable journey.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	The Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo [Deluxe Twin]



DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
12	Sat 21/11/2026	Departure	<p>After breakfast, check out of your hotel, marking the conclusion of your unforgettable 2026 Autumn Tour of Japan's Wild West.</p> <p>From Kyoto, you may choose to return to Tokyo by bullet train or catch a domestic flight from Osaka's Kansai International Airport for your international departure.</p> <p>If this is your first visit to Japan, we warmly recommend extending your stay to explore Kyoto and its surrounding regions further - rich with traditional culture, historic temples, gardens, and charming towns. We would be delighted to assist in planning a personalised post-tour extension, introducing you to another captivating side of Japan.</p> <p>Thank you for travelling with us on this immersive journey through Japan's wild and wonderful west. We hope to welcome you back again soon!</p>	Breakfast	
Inclusions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 11 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)</li> <li>■ All breakfasts</li> <li>■ 3 lunches and 8 dinners</li> <li>■ Airport meet &amp; greet on arrival in Tokyo</li> <li>■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival</li> <li>■ Airport transfer by public transport on departure</li> <li>■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans)</li> <li>■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed)</li> <li>■ Cultural activities and entry fees are included in the itinerary</li> <li>■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person)</li> </ul>		
Exclusions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated)</li> <li>■ Travel insurance</li> <li>■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal)</li> <li>■ Tips and gratuities</li> <li>■ Transport during free time</li> <li>■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.)</li> <li>■ Visa (if required)</li> </ul>		