

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2026 FOOD AND CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR OF KYUSHU JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

Start: Thursday, 26 March 2026 from Fukuoka

Finish: Wednesday, 8 April 2026 at Fukuoka

Duration: 14 days

Group size: 8 people

Cost estimate: AUD \$11,410 per person

Single supplement: AUD \$2,110 per person

Ref: GFK-26

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2026 Food and Cherry Blossom Tour of Kyushu, Japan is based on Japan's western island of Kyushu, which is fast becoming Japan's favourite foodie destination for its variety of fresh produce and artisanal traditions. Limited to just 8 guests, this comprehensive 14-day Japan food tour is perfect for those who are keen to learn about Japan's food culture. Explore a spectacular part of Japan, well away from its busy mainland centres and all against the magical backdrop of cherry blossoms!

The tour introduces different styles of Japanese cuisine from high-end haute cuisine to home-style cooking and street food. You visit generations-old traditional food producers as well as makers of fine ceramic ware, so indispensable to the proper presentation of a Japanese meal.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Thu 26/3/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>On arrival in Fukuoka* for the 2026 Food and Cherry Blossom Tour of Kyushu Japan, you'll be met by a Journey to the East staff member at Fukuoka's airport or main railway station and escorted to your hotel. Fukuoka is readily accessible both by rail and air from other places in Japan, but please let us know if you need help arranging a connection between your arrival port in Japan and Fukuoka, or if you'd like to book an additional night's accommodation in the same Fukuoka hotel.</p> <p>*Fukuoka was listed in Lonely Planet's "Best in Travel 2023" under the "Eat" category.</p>	No meals	THE BLOSSOM HAKATA Premier [Twin or King Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
2	Fri 27/3/2026	Guided tour of Fukuoka	<p>After an orientation with your guide, your tour of Fukuoka starts with a walking tour of atmospheric Hakata area. You will firstly visit a local temple and a shrine, which have deep connections with local lives. Hakata ramen is justifiably famous across Japan, and that is what you will have for lunch today. You will understand why the locals are so serious about their noodles.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you visit the lively old shopping arcade selling traditional kitchenware such as Japanese knives and dashi stock. You may also stroll through Ohori Park, once the moat of Fukuoka Castle in feudal times if cherry blossoms are in bloom.</p> <p>Tonight you enjoy a welcome dinner at a Michelin-starred Japanese restaurant, celebrated for its exquisite multi-course banquet of seasonal foods served in a traditional setting – the perfect start to a Japanese food tour!</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	THE BLOSSOM HAKATA Premier [Twin or King Room]
3	Sat 28/3/2026	Guided tour of Dazaifu	<p>Today starts with one of the special immersive experiences exclusively created by Journey to the East for our guests. You'll be welcomed into the kitchen studio of a professional chef in her own renovated traditional house and be introduced to the main concepts of Japanese cuisine, before rolling up your sleeves and preparing some tasty dishes under her guidance. With an equal emphasis on fun and serious learning, we hope this private cooking class will have you confidently recreating the delicious dishes at home!</p> <p>You later journey on to the neighbouring town of Dazaifu and visit Dazaifu's magnificent Tenmangu Shrine which commemorates the life of a famous 9th-century Kyoto scholar, later deified as the god of literature and scholarship.</p> <p>Back in Fukuoka, you enjoy a unique slice of local life at the city's legendary Yatai. These mobile carts are set up in the evening and only accommodate 10 or so people. The convivial atmosphere, shared conversation and delicious food cooked right in front of you make for an unmissable Hakata food experience!</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	THE BLOSSOM HAKATA Premier [Twin or King Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Sun 29/3/2026	Guided tour of Yame	<p>Kyushu's Yame district is one of Japan's leading tea-producing areas and today you visit a tea producer by private transport to learn about the different grades and varieties of Japanese green tea. From a mountain-top lookout, we'll view the brilliant green of the rolling tea fields below and take some photogenic snaps. Your next stop is Kyushu's oldest tea merchant, established in 1865. A real highlight, you enjoy a cup of gyokuro tea (Japan's highest tea grade) prepared by an expert at the shop.</p> <p>After lunch, it's on to learn about another famous Japanese beverage with a visit to an award-winning local sake brewer. You'll have a private tour of the production facilities followed by a sake tasting where you can chat freely with staff about the brewing process and different sake styles. Tonight you have a free evening to explore the endless food delights of Fukuoka. Chat with your guide if you need any recommendations.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	THE BLOSSOM HAKATA Premier [Twin or King Room]
5	Mon 30/3/2026	Guided tour of Itoshima	<p>Your destination today is the coastal town of Itoshima, fast becoming a foodie haven. Here you visit an old family-owned soy sauce brewery as well as a salt extraction farm to learn how these fundamental ingredients are made using traditional methods.</p> <p>You also visit the local farmers' market to see the range of produce grown in this fertile part of Kyushu. We've asked local growers and chefs to prepare a special private lunch for our group using the best produce in season. During lunch, you will receive an onigiri (Japanese rice ball) making lesson from the chef. It is an invaluable opportunity to connect in person and gain direct insights into their work and local life.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, you head to the pretty castle town of Karatsu. After a full day, relax into the Japanese aesthetic of your Ryokan hotel with its sea views and enjoy a delicious kaiseki banquet of fresh local seafood served on a series of decorative ceramic plates. A quintessential Japan experience!</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Taiboukaku [Japanese & Western style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
6	Tue 31/3/2026	Guided tour of Yobuko and Karatsu	<p>Start the day with an authentic Japanese-style breakfast – a filling and nutritious feast of grilled fish, miso soup, steamed rice and pickles.</p> <p>Nicely fortified, you head to Yobuko Morning Market, one of Japan's oldest morning markets. Here you can see fishers and stall owners hawking all kinds of seafood, including the dried local squid for which Yobuko is famous.</p> <p>This region is also known for its ceramic-making traditions, and you visit a kiln producing some of Karatsu's fine pottery. In Japan, the serving dish is regarded as an integral part of the culinary experience as the food itself and a deserving focus for any food tour of Japan.</p> <p>After Japanese wagyu beef grilled on a hot plate, Teppanyaki-style, for lunch, you stop by Kagamiyama Park to take in fine views of the Sea of Genkai framed by pretty cherry blossoms.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Taiboukaku [Japanese & Western style room]
7	Wed 1/4/2026	Guided tour of Arita and Imari	<p>Today you delve deeper into Japan's ceramic traditions and travel by private vehicle to Kyushu's two other famous pottery towns – Arita and Imari. Along with Karatsu, porcelain from these towns became highly prized both within Japan and Europe over the centuries, and remains sought after by collectors and restaurateurs alike.</p> <p>You tour a ceramics museum and a pottery village and kiln to see artisans at work creating the elaborately coloured Arita-ware and the classic blue-and-white Imari-ware.</p> <p>After an inspiring day learning about the world of Japanese ceramics, you travel on to the ever-picturesque harbour city of Nagasaki. The dinner tonight is a unique regional cuisine of Nagasaki called Shippoku Cuisine. Shippoku has been developed as a fusion of Japanese, Chinese and European (mainly Dutch) food reflecting its historical encounters with the outside world.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Nagasaki Marriott Hotel [Deluxe King Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Thu 2/4/2026	Guided tour of Nagasaki	<p>Nagasaki was the only part of Japan open to the world during Japan's closed-door period in the 17th and 18th centuries, visited by Asian and European traders and missionaries. This heritage is still evident today in the city's architecture, culture and cuisine which reflects its cosmopolitan past.</p> <p>Today you explore this fascinating city using the city's iconic streetcar, starting with a visit to the Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum which marks the events of that fateful day in August 1945. You will then visit Dejima, an open-air museum to learn about Nagasaki's historic role. A lunch stop to sample popular Japanese curry completes the morning tour.</p> <p>You have the afternoon and evening free to explore vibrant Nagasaki. Perhaps catch a ropeway up to Mt Inasa for spectacular views of the harbour at night – allegedly one of the world's best!</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Nagasaki Marriott Hotel [Deluxe King Room]
9	Fri 3/4/2026	Guided tour of Nagasaki and Unzen	<p>Today's theme is fisheries. Nagasaki boasts one of the biggest catches in Japan, and you will visit a fish farm to learn how the Japanese fisheries are conducted sustainably.</p> <p>For lunch today you'll try another popular Nagasaki staple – champon noodles.</p> <p>In the afternoon it's on to the Shimabara Peninsula, a historic and geographically unique part of Kyushu. Your destination is the onsen town of Unzen, located in the spectacular Unzen-Amakusa National Park prized for its volcanic landscapes. Here you'll stay at one of the town's onsen hotels where you can enjoy its rejuvenating mineral baths after a full day of travel.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Unzen Kyushu Hotel [Terrace Premier Double/Twin]
10	Sat 4/4/2026	Guided tour of Unzen and Shimabara	<p>The day begins with a walk to Unzen's bubbling jigoku, or boiling hot springs. You then journey by private vehicle through picturesque Nita-Toge Pass where on a clear day you get spectacular views across the bay to our next destination – Kumamoto. You continue on to visit Shimabara Castle and admire its forest of cherry blossoms, and former samurai residences. You will also stop to see the buried houses at Mt Unzen Eruption Preservation Park, which vividly captures the eruption of Mt Unzen in 1991. Later you board a ferry to Kumamoto.</p> <p>Dinner tonight is at an Italian-style restaurant, where the Italian-trained chef is well-known for his efforts to preserve heritage Kumamoto vegetables. The Japanese influence on "Italian food" is a foodies treat.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Nikko Kumamoto [Standard Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Sun 5/4/2026	Guided tour of Kumamoto	<p>This morning's guided tour of Kumamoto focuses on one of Japan's most well-known castles. Originally built in 1607, Kumamoto Castle was damaged by the 2016 earthquake and still undergoing repair. However, it remains a remarkable feudal complex with massive stone walls and it's fascinating to witness the different stages of restoration. The manicured grounds that surround this spectacular icon also offer some of Japan's best cherry blossom trees. You will also visit Suizenji Japanese Garden, built for the powerful clan who once ruled the castle and region.</p> <p>You have the rest of the day to explore Kumamoto at your leisure. You may like to browse its great selection of modern shops. The city also offers a good selection of restaurants – with international and Japanese options. Perhaps try one of its izakaya Japanese-style pubs and enjoy some good local sake?</p>	Breakfast	Hotel Nikko Kumamoto [Standard Twin]
12	Mon 6/4/2026	Guided tour of Aso region	<p>You drive through one of Kyushu's most picturesque landscapes – the volcanic caldera of Mt Aso today. You will stop at vantage points where you can appreciate the scale of the caldera and the dynamic nature of the volcano.</p> <p>Winemaking is relatively new in Japan, and today you have an opportunity to taste test some local products of the growing industry.</p> <p>Tonight you stay in a lovely boutique onsen hotel surrounded by great nature. Take a dip in an onsen bath soaking up the air of the great outdoors, and you will understand why onsen is the most popular pastime of the Japanese people.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Spa Greenness [Standard Twin Room]
13	Tue 7/4/2026	Guided tour of Fukuoka	<p>Enjoy a relaxed start to the morning before heading back to Fukuoka by a private vehicle for your last night of the tour. On the way you will stop by a large kitchen utensil shop to stock up those special items you want to take home if you would like.</p> <p>A farewell dinner tonight is a spectacular sushi meal. Relive your best memories of your Kyushu food experiences at one of Fukuoka's finest sushi restaurants, serving up the freshest Kyushu seafood!</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	THE BLOSSOM HAKATA Premier [Twin or King Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
14	Wed 8/4/2026	Departure	<p>You check out of your hotel after breakfast and your 2026 Food and Cherry Blossom Tour of Kyushu concludes.</p> <p>You can take a domestic flight from Fukuoka or return by Shinkansen (bullet train) to the international airports in Osaka or 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 the Private Tour page for inspiration.</p>		
Inclusions for Group Tour			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 13 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts, 10 lunches and 9 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Private transfer to the airport at departure ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		
Exclusions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal) ■ Tips and gratuities (not routinely expected in Japan) ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		