

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2026 WHITE CHRISTMAS TOUR OF JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

Start: Saturday, 12 December 2026 from Tokyo
Finish: Saturday, 26 December 2026 at Hakodate
Duration: 15 days
Group size: 8 people
Cost estimate: AUD \$11,970 per person
Single supplement: AUD \$2,600 per person
Ref: GWC-26

TOUR OVERVIEW

Experience a White Christmas Like No Other - 2026 Japan White Christmas Tour

Dreaming of a White Christmas with a magical twist? Step into a winter wonderland that blends serene snow-covered landscapes with the rich traditions and unexpected festive charm of Japan. The 2026 White Christmas Tour of Japan offers a once-in-a-lifetime holiday that goes far beyond the ordinary.

While Japan may not celebrate Christmas in the traditional Western sense, the spirit of the season comes alive in dazzling ways - through glowing city lights, beautifully decorated streets, and a joyful atmosphere in anticipation of the country's biggest celebration: the New Year.

To guarantee a true White Christmas, this tour takes you off the beaten path and into Japan's snow-draped mountains and the northern island of Hokkaido. Picture ancient temples and centuries-old castles blanketed in soft powder snow, quaint thatched-roof villages shimmering under icicles, and steaming onsen baths nestled in quiet alpine towns.

Whether you're drawn by the snow, the culture, or simply a desire for a Christmas holiday with a difference, this unforgettable journey through Japan offers the perfect mix of festive magic, natural beauty, and timeless tradition.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Sat 12/12/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	Welcome to Japan! On arrival at one of Tokyo's international airports, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by public transport (train or airport coach). After a good night's sleep, you will be ready to start the first full day of your 2026 White Christmas Tour of Japan.	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Standard Twin/Queen]
2	Sun 13/12/2026	Guided tour of Tokyo	<p>Your Tokyo adventure begins with an orientation alongside your guide before diving into the city's fast-paced rhythm - just like the locals - on Tokyo's iconic underground train. Step back in time as you arrive in Asakusa, where the magnificent Sensoji Temple and bustling Nakamise shopping arcade offer a glimpse into the city's rich traditions and timeless charm.</p> <p>Next, soar into the modern skyline at the Tokyo Skytree, Japan's tallest tower, glittering with festive spirit. At this time of year, the Skytree's Christmas Market sparkles with lights, music, and the scent of seasonal treats - perfect for a leisurely browse and light lunch.</p> <p>After a little rest at your hotel as evening falls, stroll through the elegant Marunouchi district, where dazzling Christmas illuminations transform the streets into a winter wonderland. Your day ends on a high note with a welcome group dinner at a local restaurant - sharing laughter, stories, and the anticipation of the journey ahead with your fellow travellers and guide.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Standard Twin/Queen]
3	Mon 14/12/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kawaguchiko (Mt Fuji)	<p>Today, you leave Tokyo transferring by train to your next destination Kawaguchiko. This small town is located in the lakes district in the foothills of Mt Fuji. Kawaguchiko offers some breathtaking views of the majestic Mt Fuji and its lakes and hosts several boutique museums and galleries.</p> <p>Tonight, you will stay at a traditional Japanese inn, and sleep on a futon bedding in a tatami matted Japanese style bedroom. Here you have the chance to soak in a hot-spring onsen bath with dramatic views of Mt Fuji across the lake (weather permitting of course!).</p> <p>Dinner will be a multi-course Japanese kaiseki banquet.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Fuji Ginkei [Japanese style room with futon bedding]

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4	Tue 15/12/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Matsumoto	<p>Once again, onboard express trains you will travel to the city of Matsumoto today. Matsumoto's beginnings go back to the 8th century, later becoming an important castle town ruled by a powerful clan in the 1600s. Its feudal past is best exemplified today by the impressive castle that dominates the city's skyline. Your guide will take you on a tour of Matsumoto's castle, Japan's oldest wooden castle and one of the nation's five castles designated national treasures. The black wooden structure is a strong contrast against the white snow. To explore the castle's wooden interior, you climb to the top of its distinctive black-and-white turret.</p> <p>You will have dinner at a local restaurant and stay overnight at a charming local hotel tonight.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel [Deluxe Double/Twin]
5	Wed 16/12/2026	Guided tour of Shirakawago and Takayama	<p>This morning, a private minibus will take you to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go, in the heart of the rugged Hida region. The view of the exquisite rural village features the traditional thatched-roof farmhouses unique to Japan's alpine regions. With their steeply slanted roofs built to withstand heavy snowfalls, they resemble "hands clasped together in prayer" (hence their name, gasshozukuri). A walk through the village allows you to experience the magic of the farmhouses in the snow, and learn more about the construction of these houses and the traditional life of the villagers.</p> <p>Later on, you will arrive at your next destination Takayama. Ambling through the old streets, you will learn about the history of this central Japan's city where you will stay for the next two nights.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi-no-Yu [Western style room]

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6	Thu 17/12/2026	Guided tour of Takayama	<p>Step into the heart of old Japan as you explore Takayama, a charming mountain town where centuries of tradition live on. Your morning begins with a guided walking tour through beautifully preserved Edo-period streets, lined with wooden merchant houses and sake breweries. Feel the rhythm of local life at the 200-year-old morning market, where friendly vendors sell fresh produce, flowers, and handmade crafts.</p> <p>Continue your cultural journey at the Festival Float Museum (Takayama Matsuri Yatai Kaikan), home to the spectacular floats used in Takayama's famous festival, before visiting Nikkokan, which showcases intricate festival miniatures and craftsmanship. Your guided walk concludes at the Takayama Jinya, a historic government house that offers a fascinating glimpse into the town's samurai-era heritage.</p> <p>The afternoon is yours to explore at your own pace - cycle through quiet lanes, wander along scenic rivers, or browse the many craft shops, sake breweries, and small museums that make Takayama so captivating. Every corner of this town tells a story - take time to discover your own.</p>	Breakfast	Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi-no-Yu [Western style room]
7	Fri 18/12/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kyoto	<p>This morning, board an express train bound for Kyoto, Japan's timeless cultural capital. Once the imperial seat in 794, Kyoto remains the guardian of ancient traditions, where centuries-old temples, elegant gardens, artisan workshops, and refined cuisine continue to define the city's soul.</p> <p>Upon arrival, explore two of Kyoto's most treasured landmarks. Step inside the impressive Nijo Castle, with its "nightingale" floors and beautifully painted chambers, then marvel at the shimmering Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), its gold-leaf exterior reflecting serenely across the surrounding pond.</p> <p>As dusk falls, follow your guide on a walking tour through Gion, Kyoto's most famous geisha district. Wander along lantern-lit streets lined with traditional wooden teahouses, and immerse yourself in the city's old-world charm. If you're lucky, you may even glimpse a geisha or maiko gracefully making her way to an evening engagement before gathering with your group for a delightful dinner at a local restaurant.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Superior King/Twin]

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8	Sat 19/12/2026	Guided tour of Kyoto and free afternoon	<p>This morning, visit one of Kyoto's most photographed landmarks - the Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its seemingly endless tunnel of vermilion torii gates winding up the sacred hillside. Soak in the spiritual atmosphere and the stunning views that make this shrine a true Kyoto icon.</p> <p>Next, dive into the lively energy of Nishiki Market, affectionately known as Kyoto's Kitchen. Wander through its narrow arcade filled with colourful stalls as locals stock up on seasonal delicacies in preparation for the New Year festivities.</p> <p>The rest of the day is free for you to explore Kyoto at your own pace - discover serene temples, hidden gardens, or boutique craft shops tucked away in traditional alleys. This evening, treat yourself to a culinary adventure in central Kyoto, where thousands of dining options await - from casual ramen counters to world-renowned Michelin-starred restaurants. Your guide will be delighted to share insider recommendations to suit your tastes.</p>	Breakfast	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Superior King/Twin]
9	Sun 20/12/2026	Transfer to and afternoon at Tomamu	<p>After exploring the cultural treasures of central Honshu, it's time to experience Japan's magical northern frontier. Today you'll take a domestic flight to Hokkaido, where vast snowy landscapes and warm hospitality await. Upon arrival, transfer to the enchanting Tomamu Resort, nestled deep in a winter forest - the perfect setting for the second half of your 2026 White Christmas Tour of Japan.</p> <p>This evening, indulge in a sumptuous buffet dinner at your hotel, featuring the finest local Hokkaido ingredients - from fresh seafood to mountain vegetables and dairy specialties - all enjoyed against a backdrop of glistening snow and whispering pines.</p> <p>After dinner, unwind in true Japanese style. Take the resort shuttle to Kirin-no-yu, an open-air hot spring surrounded by nature, where you can soak beneath the star-filled sky, the steam rising softly into the crisp winter air. Or, if you prefer, retreat to your room for a private jacuzzi and sauna - the perfect way to end your first magical night in Hokkaido.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hoshino Resorts Tomamu [Suite Twin Room at Resonare]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
10	Mon 21/12/2026	A day at Tomamu	<p>Start your day by diving straight into Hokkaido's famous powder snow with a guided snowshoe walk. Your guide will show you how to strap on and walk in snowshoes, making it easy even for first-timers, while sharing fascinating insights about the wildlife of the snowy mountains. Feel the crisp air, crunch beneath your feet, and take in the pristine winter landscape surrounding you.</p> <p>The afternoon is yours to embrace Tomamu at your own pace. For adventure seekers, ski or snowboard rentals offer the chance to carve through some of Japan's finest powder. For a more serene experience, ride the Unkai Gondola to the Terrace of Frost Tree, where snow-laden trees glisten like crystal and the Hidaka Mountains stretch majestically into the distance.</p> <p>If you prefer hands-on fun, try one of the creative workshops: make Whey Soap, craft with Ezo Birch, bake a traditional Baumkuchen, or even go pond ice fishing - perfect for a touch of local culture.</p> <p>As evening falls, enjoy dinner on Hotalu Street, sampling the resort's diverse culinary offerings. Afterwards, take the shuttle to the Ice Village, a winter wonderland sculpted entirely from ice. Explore the Ice Bar and Ice Parlor, send a postcard from the Ice Post Office, marvel from the observation deck, or slide down the ice slide for a playful end to your day in Hokkaido's snowy paradise. (N.B. Availability of the snow activities are weather dependent.)</p>	Breakfast	Hoshino Resorts Tomamu [Suite Twin Room at Resonare]
11	Tue 22/12/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Sapporo	<p>This morning, leave the snowy wonderland of Tomamu and transfer to Sapporo, the bustling heart of Hokkaido. Upon arrival, why not try Sapporo's signature dish - miso ramen - warming up with rich flavors after your morning journey.</p> <p>In the afternoon, embark on a guided walking tour that unveils the city's fascinating history and unique development. Stop at the iconic Clock Tower, a historic landmark originally built as an agricultural college in 1878, then stroll past charming brick buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries as you make your way to Odori Koen, a 1.5 km-long park that forms the vibrant heart of the city.</p> <p>End your day with a local izakaya dinner, savoring Hokkaido specialties and enjoying the lively atmosphere with your fellow travellers.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Sapporo Grand Hotel [Standard Large Twin/Double]

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12	Wed 23/12/2026	Guided tour of Otaru	<p>Today, your guide will lead you through the enchanting town of Otaru, once a bustling trading hub where the Ainu people, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian merchants came together to exchange goods. Stroll past grand stone and brick buildings from the town's late 19th-century boom, and explore warehouses now transformed into museums, cafés, and boutique shops along the scenic canals. You'll also enjoy a fresh sushi lunch, sampling some of Otaru's finest seafood, celebrated across Japan for its quality and flavor.</p> <p>After lunch, wander along Otaru's iconic central canal, its Victorian-style street lamps reflecting in the water - a perfect spot for photos and soaking in the town's charm. Return to Sapporo in the afternoon, and enjoy a free evening to explore the city's culinary delights. Don't miss the Sapporo Christmas Market, sparkling with seasonal lights and filled with handcrafted treasures and local treats, ideal for picking up festive souvenirs.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Sapporo Grand Hotel [Standard Large Twin/Double]
13	Thu 24/12/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Hakodate	<p>Today, you reach your final destination: Hakodate, at the southern tip of Hokkaido. Designated as one of Japan's first legitimate foreign trade ports, Hakodate is a fascinating blend of Japanese and European influences, reflected in its architecture and streetscapes. Upon arrival by express train, begin your exploration with the Goryokaku Fort, a remarkable five-pointed star-shaped fort designed by samurai Takeda Ayasaburo, inspired by the French military engineer Vauban. Completed in 1864 as Japan's first Western-style fortification, the fort sits at the heart of this historic city, whose 19th-century streets evoke a distinctly European atmosphere.</p> <p>Tonight is Christmas Eve, and Hakodate is brimming with festive spirit. Don't miss the gorgeous Christmas market near your hotel, alive with twinkling lights, seasonal treats, and local crafts.</p> <p>As evening falls, ascend Mount Hakodate. From the observatory at the summit, marvel at a panoramic night view of the city - a sparkling mosaic of lights often ranked among Japan's top three nightscapes, creating a truly magical end to your day.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Nipponia Hakodate Minatomachi [VMG Grand Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
14	Fri 25/12/2026	Guided tour of Hakodate	<p>Start your day at the Hakodate Morning Market, one of Japan's liveliest seafood markets, where a dazzling variety of fresh catches are on display. Stroll through the bustling stalls with your guide, soaking in the sights, sounds, and flavors of Hokkaido's seafood culture.</p> <p>Continue your guided tour of Hakodate, exploring the historic Motomachi district with its charming European-influenced architecture, and the heritage Red Brick Warehouse district along the waterfront, where a giant Christmas tree adds a festive sparkle. The tour also includes the Ainu Museum, offering fascinating insights into the history and culture of Hokkaido's indigenous people and celebrating the region's cultural diversity.</p> <p>This evening marks your final gathering as a group. Celebrate a memorable White Christmas Tour of Japan with a special group Christmas dinner, sharing stories, laughter, and the joy of a truly unforgettable journey.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Nipponia Hakodate Minatomachi [VMG Grand Twin]
15	Sat 26/12/2026	Departure	<p>After breakfast, your 2026 White Christmas Tour of Japan comes to a close. From here, you may fly or take the train out of Hakodate, or extend your stay to explore more of Hokkaido's winter wonderland. We would be delighted to assist with personal transfers, whether it's a flight to Tokyo, an extra stay in Hokkaido, or travel to another part of Japan. Please speak with one of our friendly travel consultants to tailor your plans after the small group tour.</p>	Breakfast	
		Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 14 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts ■ 2 lunches & 9 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet and hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Domestic flight from Osaka to Sapporo ■ Airport transfer in Hakodate on the last day ■ Expert English speaking tour guides (Locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		

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		Exclusions for Group Tour	<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 ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		