

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2027 AUTUMN TOUR OF NORTHERN JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

START: **(Refer to website for date) from Tokyo**

FINISH: at Tokyo

DURATION: **11 days**

PRICE: **AUD \$10,090 per person**

GROUP size: **8 people**

SINGLE SUPP: **AUD \$1,650 per person**

REF: GAN-27

TOUR OVERVIEW

2027 Autumn Tour of Northern Japan: A Journey Through Tohoku's Timeless Beauty

Experience the heart of rural Japan on this 11-day small-group journey through Tohoku, the unspoiled northern region of Honshu, at the height of autumn's fiery splendour. Specially timed for peak foliage, this itinerary begins in Tokyo and weaves through the region's most stunning and culturally rich destinations, including Nikko, Oirase Gorge, Lake Towada, Kakunodate, Lake Tazawa, Hiraizumi and Matsushima.

Tohoku's centuries of relative isolation have preserved its samurai-era towns, folk traditions, and vast natural landscapes. Along the way, you'll stay in handpicked onsen towns, savour local cuisine and sake, and enjoy warm encounters with the famously hospitable people of the region.

Perfect for nature lovers, culture seekers, and those wishing to step off the tourist trail, this tour offers an authentic, slower-paced Japan - ideal for both first-time visitors wanting depth and variety, and seasoned travellers eager to explore the road less travelled.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>Upon arrival at Narita or Haneda Airport, you will be warmly greeted by your Journey to the East guide, who will assist you with the smooth transfer to your hotel in Tokyo. There are no scheduled group activities today, allowing you to settle in and unwind after your flight.</p> <p>Your accommodation is set in the culturally rich neighbourhood of Asakusa, home to Tokyo's oldest temple, Sensoji. Whether you prefer to rest or take a gentle stroll through this atmospheric district, the day is yours to ease into the rhythm of Japan at your own pace.</p> <p>Many of our guests opt to arrive a day or two early, allowing time to adjust to the new time zone and enjoy a more leisurely start to their journey. For first-time visitors, an extended stay in Tokyo offers a wonderful introduction to Japan's vibrant capital, with its harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. We would be delighted to assist with additional nights in the same hotel room, subject to availability.</p>	No meals	The Gate Hotel Kaminarimon [Essential Hollywood Twin/Double]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
		Tomorrow, your off-the-beaten-path cultural exploration of Northern Japan begins in earnest.		
2	Transfer to and guided tour of Nikko	<p>Leaving the bustle of Tokyo behind, travel by express train into the forested mountains of Nikko, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed centre of culture and spirituality. Once a remote Buddhist hermitage, Nikko flourished in the 17th century when it became the final resting place of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the powerful shogun who unified Japan.</p> <p>Walk beneath towering centuries-old cedar trees to the ornate Toshogu Shrine, a masterpiece of craftsmanship surrounded by deep autumn colours and sacred stillness. Take time to absorb the atmosphere and explore the richly decorated shrine buildings nestled within the forest.</p> <p>Later, visit the atmospheric Kanmangafuchi Abyss, where rows of stone Jizo statues line a clear mountain stream framed by brilliant autumn foliage.</p> <p>Tonight, stay at a traditional Japanese inn, sleeping on futon bedding laid out on tatami mat flooring. Combined with a soothing onsen bath and beautifully prepared kaiseki dinner, this is a wonderful introduction to the refined hospitality and traditions of Japan.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Tsurukame Daikichi [Japanese style room with futon beddings]
3	Guided tour of Nikko	<p>Today, venture deeper into the heart of Nikko National Park, one of Japan's most celebrated autumn destinations. Travelling through Oku-Nikko (Inner Nikko), witness nature at its most vibrant as fiery maple and golden beech trees colour the landscape in rich seasonal hues.</p> <p>Along the way, enjoy a breathtaking gondola ride at Akechidaira Ropeway, gliding above a valley ablaze with autumn colours.</p> <p>Stops include the sweeping beauty of Senjogahara Marshland, serene Lake Chuzenji reflecting the surrounding mountains, and the spectacular 100-metre-high Kegon Falls, an iconic cascade formed by ancient volcanic activity. Each location offers a different perspective on Nikko's remarkable autumn scenery.</p> <p>Return to your accommodation for a second night, with more time to enjoy the peaceful rhythm of the mountains and streams in peak autumn splendour.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tsurukame Daikichi [Japanese style room with futon beddings]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Transfer to and guided tour of Kakunodate	<p>This morning, travel north by shinkansen through the heart of rural Tohoku to your next destination, Kakunodate. Often referred to as “Tohoku’s Little Kyoto”, it was once a key northern stronghold during the feudal era. The town still preserves its elegant samurai traditions, from finely crafted cherry bark ware to pottery and other heritage crafts. The historic samurai and merchant districts remain beautifully intact, offering a glimpse into 17th-century Japan.</p> <p>Upon arrival, delve into the historical charm of Kakunodate with your guide. Your exploration includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A visit to one or more beautifully preserved samurai residences, offering a glimpse into the daily life of mid to lower-class samurai during the Edo period, - The Kakunodate Craft Museum, showcasing the region’s refined traditional crafts, and - Local specialty shops feature handmade goods and regional delicacies like miso and soy sauce. <p>Settle into your boutique accommodation, where Tohoku’s signature warmth and hospitality await. For dinner, savour a local wagyu beef meal which perfectly captures the flavours of the region.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tamachi Bukeyashiki Hotel [Western style twin room]
5	Guided tour of Lake Tazawa and Kakunodate	<p>This morning, your journey takes you to Tazawa-ko, Japan’s deepest lake, renowned for its crystal-clear blue waters and spectacular mountain setting. Your guide will share the legend of the female dragon spirit said to dwell in the lake, and you’ll visit the associated shrine and iconic statue, a serene spot steeped in local folklore.</p> <p>On the return journey to Kakunodate, enjoy a unique cultural experience with an exclusive zazen (Zen meditation) session at a local temple, offering a glimpse into centuries-old spiritual practice. Afterwards, savour a farm-to-table lunch at a nearby farm restaurant, highlighting the region’s fresh, seasonal ingredients.</p> <p>In the afternoon, return to central Kakunodate for a hands-on experience with the town’s famous cherry bark craft, creating your own piece under the guidance of skilled artisans. The rest of the day is free to explore at your leisure. Take time to browse the traditional shops, offering locally made crafts and food items such as miso paste, dashi stock, and pickles, for an authentic taste of northern Japan’s culture and heritage.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Tamachi Bukeyashiki Hotel [Western style twin room]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
6	Transfer to and guided tour of Lake Towada	<p>Today, a minibus ride takes you deep into the far north of Honshu to Aomori Prefecture - a rugged, remote region shaped by harsh winters and centuries of isolation. This geographic solitude has preserved its distinct folk traditions, regional cuisine, and unique architecture.</p> <p>You'll stay in the scenic Oirase and Lake Towada area, one of Japan's most breathtaking autumn landscapes, for the next two days. Cascading mountain streams, fiery foliage, and peaceful lake views make this a paradise for nature lovers, walkers, and photographers alike.</p> <p>Take a scenic cruise across Lake Towada, its calm waters mirroring the fiery reds, oranges, and golds of surrounding forested slopes - an unforgettable panorama of seasonal colour.</p> <p>Your accommodation offers another opportunity to unwind in an onsen bath and savour a beautifully presented dinner showcasing the flavours of northern Japan.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Towada Prince Hotel [Lake-side TWN 25.5sqm]
7	Transfer to and guided tour of Oirase and Lake Towada	<p>Today is devoted to the breathtaking natural beauty of the Oirase Gorge and Lake Towada, two of Japan's most celebrated autumn landscapes.</p> <p>Enjoy a leisurely walk beside the crystal-clear Oirase River, following a gentle 7 km trail (or a shorter section, if you prefer) through a landscape of moss-covered rocks, cascading waterfalls, and brilliantly coloured autumn foliage. With every turn revealing another picture-perfect scene, this is a paradise for photographers and nature lovers alike.</p> <p>After an active morning, spend a relaxing afternoon at your own pace - unwind at the hotel, sample local specialty snacks at the café, or take a peaceful stroll along the lakeshore as the autumn colours reflect across the water.</p> <p>Tonight, enjoy a second stay in the tranquil Lake Towada area. Dinner is served at your hotel, providing a warm and relaxing conclusion to a day immersed in nature.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Towada Prince Hotel [Lake-side TWN 25.5sqm]
8	Guided tour of Hiraizumi and transfer to Matsushima	<p>This morning, travel by private minibus to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Chuson-ji in Hiraizumi, a sacred temple complex founded in 850 at the height of the region's prosperity. The highlight is the extraordinary Konjikido (Golden Hall), lavishly adorned in gold leaf and intricate craftsmanship - a dazzling reminder of the power, wealth, and deep Buddhist devotion that once flourished in Northern Japan.</p> <p>In the afternoon, continue to Matsushima, famed as one of Japan's Three Most Scenic Views (Nihon Sankei). Dotted with pine-covered islands rising from the bay, Matsushima has inspired poets, monks, and travellers for centuries with its serene coastal beauty.</p> <p>Your day concludes in Matsushima, where the region's rich seafood culture takes centre stage. Tonight's buffet dinner at your hotel showcases fresh local seafood and classic Tohoku specialties, offering a delicious introduction to the flavours of Japan's northern coast.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Matsushima Taikanso [Japanese style room with Western beds]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
9	Guided tour of Shiogama and Matsushima	<p>Today's journey takes you along the scenic coast to the charming city of Shiogama, a hidden gem often overlooked in favour of its more famous neighbour, Matsushima. With far fewer tourists, Shiogama offers an authentic and peaceful glimpse into coastal life in Japan.</p> <p>Begin with a visit to Shiogama Shrine, an impressive Shinto complex revered for centuries and recognised as an Important Cultural Property. Next, enjoy a sake tasting at a local boutique brewery, where you'll sample refined brews crafted using traditional methods. For lunch, indulge in some of Japan's finest sushi - Shiogama is one of the country's busiest fresh tuna ports and is renowned for its exceptional seafood.</p> <p>In the afternoon, board a scenic cruise through Matsushima Bay, dotted with over 250 pine-clad islets shaped by wind and sea over time. It's considered one of Japan's three most celebrated scenic views.</p> <p>After arriving by boat, enjoy a peaceful break with frothy matcha green tea and seasonal sweets at Kanrantei, a historic teahouse overlooking the bay.</p> <p>Tonight, take the opportunity to visit Entsū-in, a serene 17th-century Zen temple whose gardens glow in vibrant autumn colours, beautifully illuminated at night.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Matsushima Taikanso [Japanese style room with Western beds]
10	Guided tour of Matsushima	<p>This morning, on the last day of the tour, enjoy a guided cultural walk through Matsushima, one of Japan's most scenic coastal towns. Visit the atmospheric Zuiganji Temple, one of Tohoku's most revered Zen temples, originally founded in 828 and later rebuilt by the powerful feudal lord Date Masamune. Then, cross the striking vermilion bridge to Godaido, a small island shrine and Important Cultural Property, offering sweeping views across the bay.</p> <p>Your guide will share stories of Matsushima's rich history, from the legacy of Date Masamune to the travels of the famed haiku poet Matsuo Basho, who found deep inspiration in these landscapes during his 17th-century journey.</p> <p>This afternoon is yours to explore at your own pace. Wander the smaller islets linked by footbridges - quiet, wooded places once used for pilgrimage, dotted with stone monuments and meditation caves.</p> <p>Tonight, you will gather for the one last time for a final farewell dinner with your fellow travellers - a chance to reflect on your unforgettable autumn journey through northern Japan.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Matsushima Taikanso [Japanese style room with Western beds]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Departure	<p>After breakfast, check out of your hotel and begin your journey back to Tokyo, travelling comfortably by shinkansen alongside your guide. On arrival at Tokyo Station, your guide will assist you with the smooth transition to your airport transfer, whether you're departing from Narita or Haneda International Airport.</p> <p>This marks the conclusion of your unforgettable 2027 Autumn Tour of Northern Japan - a journey filled with cultural discovery, scenic beauty, and meaningful connections.</p> <p>If you wish to extend your time in Japan, we would be delighted to help you plan a personalised post-tour extension. Whether you're drawn to the serene countryside, vibrant cities, or lesser-known regions, we can tailor an experience to introduce you to yet another captivating facet of Japan.</p> <p><i>If you plan to depart today, please ensure your flight is departing after 15:00 to allow sufficient travel time from Matsushima.</i></p>	Breakfast	
	Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10 nights' accommodation listed above ■ All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 9 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ Airport transfer from Tokyo Station by public transport on departure ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees are included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		
	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) 		