

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2027 CRAFTS AND CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR OF SEA OF JAPAN COAST (SIGNATURE)

Start: Saturday, 3 April 2027 from Tokyo

Finish: Friday, 16 April 2027 at Tokyo

Duration: 14 days

Group size: 8 people

Cost estimate: AUD \$10,950 per person

Single supplement: AUD \$2,500 per person

Ref: GSJ-27

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2027 Crafts and Cherry Blossom Tour of the Sea of Japan Coast invites you on a deeply rewarding journey through Japan's lesser-known Hokuriku region - an area celebrated for its unspoiled landscapes, refined craftsmanship, and slower pace of life. Sheltered behind the dramatic Japanese Alps, this coastal stretch remains refreshingly free from mass tourism, offering an authentic window into rural Japan. The itinerary begins in Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan's two most iconic cities, creating a perfect balance of classic highlights and immersive regional discovery.

A major highlight of this 14-day cultural journey is the opportunity to visit a remarkable range of artisan studios. You'll meet craftspeople dedicated to preserving traditional Japanese arts - kimono fabric weaving and dyeing, fine ceramics, knife making, exquisite lacquerware, and handmade washi paper. These intimate encounters offer rare insight into centuries-old skills that still shape Hokuriku's cultural identity today.

Along the way, you'll also explore the region's profound Buddhist heritage, mountain culture, gassho-style thatched farmhouses, samurai history, and coastal fishing towns with their lively seafood markets. Set against the beauty of cherry blossom season, this rural Japan tour is ideal for mature travellers who value authentic experiences, meaningful cultural connections, and the charm of the roads less travelled.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Sat 3/4/2027	Airport meet and greet on arrival	Welcome to Japan and the 2027 Crafts and Cherry Blossom Tour of the Sea of Japan Coast. On arrival at one of Tokyo's international airports, you'll be warmly greeted by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by airport bus or train. Today is an arrival day, and no group activities are scheduled. After	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Queen/Twin]

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			<p>settling in, you may wish to stretch your legs and explore the local neighbourhood around your hotel.</p> <p>This tour is particularly popular with repeat Japan travellers, so the Tokyo experiences included in the itinerary focus on lesser-known neighbourhoods and cultural insights rather than the typical tourist sites. If this is your first visit to Japan and you wish to see iconic highlights such as Asakusa, Shibuya, or the Tokyo Skytree, we highly recommend arriving a couple of days early to explore the city before the tour begins. We would be delighted to create a custom pre-tour itinerary tailored to your interests.</p> <p>Many guests choose to arrive a day or two early. Please contact us if you'd like assistance arranging additional nights' accommodation.</p>		
2	Sun 4/4/2027	Guided tour of Fukagawa (Tokyo)	<p>After a brief orientation with your guide, you begin your discovery of Tokyo, a city where modern energy meets centuries-old tradition. Rather than focusing on the usual crowded highlights, today's exploration introduces you to quieter, culturally rich neighbourhoods where everyday life unfolds - offering a more authentic view of Japan's capital.</p> <p>You'll travel by Tokyo's efficient subway to Fukagawa, a delightful district that retains the relaxed atmosphere of the city's old shitamachi (downtown) culture. Despite its proximity to the bustling business areas, Fukagawa feels welcoming and unpretentious, with a strong sense of community and history.</p> <p>Here you'll visit Fukagawa Fudo-do, where you can witness a dynamic Buddhist ceremony featuring powerful taiko drumming and the dramatic goma fire ritual - an immersive cultural experience rarely seen by typical tourists. Afterwards, enjoy a serene visit to Kiyosumi Garden, a beautifully landscaped traditional Japanese garden where cherry blossoms and tranquil ponds create a perfect setting for reflection and photography.</p> <p>After a day of enriching exploration, return to your hotel before gathering for a relaxed welcome dinner at a local Japanese izakaya, the perfect setting to enjoy traditional dishes and connect with your fellow travellers.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Queen/Twin]

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3	Mon 5/4/2027	Transfer to and guided tour of Kyoto	<p>This morning, you leave the bustling metropolis of Tokyo behind and travel by shinkansen (bullet train) to Kyoto, Japan's historic and ever-popular old capital. Established in 794, Kyoto remains the cultural heart of Japan, renowned for its temples, gardens, and traditional crafts, as well as its refined dining and artisan boutiques.</p> <p>Upon arrival, enjoy an afternoon guided tour of Kyoto, visiting the majestic Nijo Castle, a former residence of the shoguns, and the iconic Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), whose shimmering gold leaf façade and serene gardens are a highlight of the city.</p> <p>In the evening, gather for a relaxed dinner in the heart of Kyoto, with the city's streets softly illuminated to highlight the springtime cherry trees, creating a magical atmosphere perfect for a gentle evening stroll.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Superior King/Twin]
4	Tue 6/4/2027	Guided tour of Arashiyama	<p>Today, you explore Arashiyama and Sagano, nestled in Kyoto's picturesque western mountains. The day begins with a visit to Tenryu-ji, a UNESCO World Heritage temple renowned for its superb stroll garden, which artfully incorporates the surrounding mountains into its design.</p> <p>Next, you'll admire the historic Togetsu Bridge, spanning the serene Katsura River, before wandering through the enchanting bamboo forest, where sunlight filters through towering bamboo stalks to create an ethereal atmosphere. Continuing on, you'll visit Daikakuji Temple, known for its tranquil lake fringed by cherry trees, offering a peaceful contrast to the more frequented sites.</p> <p>The day concludes with a traditional tofu lunch, a local specialty of Arashiyama. After lunch, you return to central Kyoto, with the afternoon and evening at leisure. Our team is happy to provide personalised suggestions and recommendations to help you enjoy your free time in Kyoto.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Superior King/Twin]

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5	Wed 7/4/2027	Transfer to and guided tour of Fukui	<p>This morning, you leave Kyoto and travel by express train to Fukui Prefecture, entering the scenic Sea of Japan region. Your first stop is the city of Echizen, long celebrated for its rich artisanal traditions.</p> <p>Begin with a visit to a washi paper workshop, where you'll see skilled craftspeople create exquisite handmade paper using techniques passed down for centuries. After lunch, continue to a family-run knife factory, renowned for producing precision blades prized by chefs across Japan. Your final stop of the day is a lacquerware studio, where artisans demonstrate the meticulous process of applying layers of lacquer to create elegant, enduring works of functional art.</p> <p>In the evening, check into your hotel in Fukui City and relax, reflecting on a day immersed in Japan's masterful crafts and artisanal heritage.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Courtyard by Marriott Fukui [Superior King/Twin]
6	Thu 8/4/2027	Guided tour of Fukui and transfer to Kanazawa	<p>This morning, you visit Eiheiji (Temple of Eternal Peace), one of Japan's most significant Zen Buddhist temples. Founded in 1244 by the renowned priest Dogen Zenji, Eiheiji is the spiritual heart of the Soto School, Japan's largest Zen sect.</p> <p>Next, travel by private transport to Maruoka Castle, one of Japan's oldest surviving castles, famous for its cherry blossoms in spring. The castle's picturesque grounds, framed by blooming sakura, offer an idyllic setting for photography and a gentle stroll, creating a perfect seasonal highlight.</p> <p>Continuing along the Sea of Japan coast, you arrive at Tojinbo, where you take a short cruise to admire the dramatic rock formations from the ocean. These rugged cliffs, part of Echizen-Kaga Kaigan Quasi-National Park, have been sculpted over millions of years into spectacular honeycomb-shaped columns by wind and waves - a natural wonder and a photographer's delight.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, you reach Kanazawa, a city with a rich samurai heritage and a legacy as a wealthy castle town. After checking into your hotel, your guide will provide an orientation for the area, followed by dinner. You stay in Kanazawa for three nights, allowing a more relaxed pace to explore the city's architectural gems, gardens, museums, and vibrant craft traditions at leisure.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	INTERGATE Kanazawa [Hollywood Twin]

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7	Fri 9/4/2027	Guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>Today, you explore Kanazawa, a city renowned for its rich samurai heritage and exceptional craft traditions. Begin with a visit to Kenrokuen Garden, a 17th-century castle garden celebrated as one of Japan's three great gardens. Stroll through its carefully landscaped grounds and admire the ancient cherry trees, capturing the serene beauty that has inspired poets and painters for centuries.</p> <p>In the afternoon, delve into Kanazawa's artisanal heritage with a visit to a Kaga Yuzen kimono studio. The master artisan demonstrates the intricate dyeing techniques that produce kimonos adorned with designs inspired by nature and geometric patterns, a hallmark of this centuries-old craft. You will also visit a Kutani-style pottery kiln, founded in 1870, where a guided tour reveals the creation process behind these highly prized porcelain works. Marvel at the kiln's exquisite pieces, celebrated for their vibrant colours and intricate designs.</p> <p>This evening, enjoy a teppanyaki dinner featuring tender wagyu beef and seasonal vegetables expertly grilled on a hot plate - a perfect combination of fine dining and Japanese culinary artistry.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	INTERGATE Kanazawa [Hollywood Twin]
8	Sat 10/4/2027	Morning guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>This morning, explore the Higashi Chaya District, Kanazawa's historic geisha quarter, where elegant wooden teahouses line narrow streets. Here you can step back in time to experience the refined culture of the geisha and admire the traditional architecture that has been carefully preserved for centuries. As part of your visit, enjoy a hands-on gold leaf experience, a craft for which Kanazawa is world-famous, allowing you to try applying this exquisite material to a small souvenir.</p> <p>Next, visit Omicho Market, a lively working market often called the "Kitchen of Kanazawa residents." Stroll among fishmongers, fresh produce stalls, and local eateries, gaining insight into the everyday life and culinary traditions of the city.</p> <p>The afternoon and evening are free to explore at your leisure. Wander Kanazawa's backstreets to discover galleries and shops offering exquisite ceramics, gilded lacquerware, local sake, and traditional foods. Your guide is available to provide tailored suggestions based on your interests, helping you make the most of your independent exploration.</p>	Breakfast	INTERGATE Kanazawa [Hollywood Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
9	Sun 11/4/2027	Guided Tour of Gokayama and Inami	<p>Leaving Kanazawa, you journey along the scenic Sea of Japan coast to Toyama Prefecture, a region celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and artisanal traditions. Your first stop is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Gokayama, renowned for its historic gassho-zukuri thatched farmhouses. These steeply slanted roofs were ingeniously designed to withstand heavy snowfall. Several farmhouses are open to the public, where you can learn about their history, construction techniques, and ongoing preservation efforts that keep this centuries-old architecture alive.</p> <p>Next, explore the traditional woodworking town of Inami, set in Toyama's picturesque countryside. While Japan has many towns with woodcraft traditions, Inami is widely recognised as the country's premier centre for woodcarving. Its high level of craftsmanship has earned the official "Japan Heritage" designation by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. In the afternoon, take part in a hands-on woodcraft workshop, guided by a master artisan. Fashion a small dish or spoon while engaging with local craftsmen, gaining insight into their daily lives and artistic practices in a relaxed, welcoming studio setting.</p> <p>Tonight, you stay at a boutique accommodation that has thoughtfully renovated the town's historic buildings into charming villas, perfectly reflecting the day's focus on craft and heritage.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Bed & Craft [Renovated traditional house]
10	Mon 12/4/2027	Guided Tour of Inami & Toyama Bay	<p>Enjoy a relaxed morning at your charming accommodation in Inami, taking time to appreciate the town's tranquil streets and artisanal heritage. Begin with a visit to Zuisenji Temple, considered the pinnacle of Inami woodcraft. Admire the intricate woodwork on the temple's main hall and Sanmon gate, reflecting the skill and dedication of local craftsmen over generations.</p> <p>Next, travel to the sparkling waters of Toyama Bay, renowned for its rich marine life and natural beauty. Recognised by UNESCO as part of the "Most Beautiful Bays in the World Club," Toyama Bay is one of Japan's premier locations for fresh seafood. You'll have the unique opportunity to witness a live seafood auction at Shinminato Kittokito Market, gaining insight into local fishing traditions and culinary practices. Afterwards, enjoy a sushi lunch featuring seafood freshly caught from the bay.</p> <p>In the afternoon, transfer to Toyama City, the prefectural capital, where you stay for two nights. This relaxed regional city offers abundant green space and a welcoming atmosphere, with your centrally located hotel providing the perfect base for gentle evening strolls. Tonight, gather for dinner at a local restaurant, enjoying the region's fresh seasonal ingredients in a casual, inviting setting.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel JAL City Toyama [Superior Twin]

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11	Tue 13/4/2027	Morning guided tour of Toyama	<p>This morning, enjoy a scenic cruise along the canal, gliding through a stunning tunnel of cherry blossoms, a serene and unforgettable way to experience spring in Toyama. After the cruise, continue your exploration with visits to local studios, where you can observe skilled artisans at work and gain insight into the region's rich craft traditions.</p> <p>The afternoon and evening are at leisure, allowing you to explore Toyama City at your own pace. Discover its numerous art and craft museums, tranquil parks and gardens, and charming modern shopping streets. For those seeking nearby excursions, the historic port town of Iwase is highly recommended. You might also visit the Glass Art Museum, renowned for its contemporary displays, or the Hotaruika (firefly squid) Museum, a unique insight into one of Toyama's most fascinating marine phenomena.</p>	Breakfast	Hotel JAL City Toyama [Superior Twin]
12	Wed 14/4/2027	Guided Tour of Toyama and transfer to Unazaki Onsen	<p>This morning, explore Toyama's long history as a centre of traditional and modern Japanese pharmaceuticals with a visit to a historic medicine shop. Here, centuries-old remedies and medicinal herbs are still available, offering a fascinating glimpse into Japan's enduring herbal medicine traditions.</p> <p>In the afternoon, enjoy a visit to a seasonal natural spectacle along the Funakawa River, locally known as the "Spring Quartet." Contrasting rows of vibrant rapeseed and tulips sit alongside delicate cherry blossoms, framed by the dramatic snow-capped Northern Alps - a striking scene unique to this time of year and a photographer's dream.</p> <p>Tonight, retreat to an authentic onsen ryokan in Unazuki, a charming hot spring town nestled in the foothills of the spectacular Kurobe Gorge. Relax in the natural hot spring baths, unwind in a traditionally furnished tatami-mat room, and enjoy a kaiseki multi-course dinner, showcasing seasonal ingredients and refined Japanese culinary artistry.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Unazuki Onsen Enraku [Japanese style room with futon beddings and view of Kurobe Gorge]

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13	Thu 15/4/2027	Transfer to Tokyo	<p>After a splendid Japanese-style breakfast at your ryokan, you leave the Sea of Japan Coast and travel by shinkansen back to Tokyo. Upon arrival, the day is at your leisure. Take the opportunity for last-minute shopping, revisit favourite neighbourhoods, or explore a few of the city's countless cultural and historic sites. Our team is happy to provide personalised suggestions and directions to help you make the most of your free time.</p> <p>This evening, gather for a farewell dinner with your fellow travellers. Share stories, relive the highlights, and celebrate the rich experiences, artisan encounters, and stunning landscapes that have made your 2027 Crafts and Cherry Blossom Tour of the Sea of Japan Coast unforgettable.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Standard Twin/Queen]
14	Fri 16/4/2027	Departure	<p>After breakfast, you check out of your hotel, marking the conclusion of your 2027 Crafts and Cherry Blossom Tour of the Sea of Japan Coast.</p> <p>For your departure, convenient options include the airport express train or limousine bus to Narita or Haneda International Airport. If you wish to extend your stay in Japan, we would be delighted to help plan a personalised post-tour itinerary, allowing you to explore another region, experience more cultural treasures, or enjoy further seasonal beauty.</p>	Breakfast	
Inclusions for Group Tour					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 13 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts, 5 lunches & 9 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Airport transfer from the hotel by public transport on departure ■ Pre-loaded transport IC card ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees are included in the 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) 		