

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2027 GARDEN AND ART TOUR OF JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

START: (Refer to website for date) from Tokyo

DURATION: 15 days

PRICE: AUD \$12,680 per person

SINGLE SUPP: AUD \$2,800 per person

FINISH: at Kyoto

GROUP size: 8 people

REF: GGA-27a

TOUR OVERVIEW

If your heart lifts at the sight of a perfectly placed stone, a sweep of moss beneath maple leaves, or a gallery where light and space become art, this tour was designed for you.

This 15-day, fully escorted small-group journey invites you to experience Japan through its most refined expressions — sublime gardens and world-class art, both traditional and contemporary. Travelling at a relaxed pace, you will explore Tokyo, Hakone, Kanazawa, Okayama, Bizen, Naoshima and Kyoto — destinations that together reveal the breadth of Japan's cultural and artistic heritage. From serene strolling gardens and Zen temple landscapes to cutting-edge contemporary art spaces, each stop has been chosen for its beauty, significance and atmosphere.

Along the way, enjoy a thoughtfully varied selection of accommodations and regional cuisine, as well as meaningful cultural experiences that deepen your understanding of Japan's refined design traditions and living culture — highlights that make travel here so rewarding.

Departures are offered in May, October and November, widely regarded as the ideal seasons to visit. The weather is typically mild and sunny, and the gardens are at their seasonal peak — whether fresh with spring growth or glowing with autumn colour.

This tour is not designed exclusively for horticultural specialists (though they are very welcome), but for travellers who simply love gardens and art and wish to explore Japan in depth, in the company of a congenial small group, with expert guidance throughout.

*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 International Airport, you will be warmly greeted by your Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by public transport.</p> <p>Today is an arrival day, and no formal program is scheduled. Your hotel is ideally located in central Tokyo, within easy reach of the elegant boutiques and galleries of Ginza. Take a gentle stroll through the neighbourhood, enjoy a relaxed dinner, or simply unwind after your journey and prepare for the inspiring days ahead.</p> <p>Many of our guests choose to arrive a day or two early to adjust to the time difference and begin exploring at a leisurely pace. We are pleased to assist with arranging additional nights' accommodation, and will endeavour to secure the same room as your tour stay for</p>	No meals	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
		added comfort and convenience.		
2	Guided tour of Tokyo and Omiya	<p>After meeting your guide and fellow travellers in the hotel lobby, your Garden and Art Tour of Japan begins in earnest.</p> <p>This morning, you visit Hamarikyu Gardens, one of Tokyo's finest traditional landscape gardens. Created in the 17th century by the ruling Tokugawa family during the Edo period, it was later redesigned as a public garden and opened in 1946. Set against a backdrop of modern skyscrapers, the garden features tidal ponds, seasonal flowers, and a magnificent 300-year-old pine tree, meticulously trained over centuries into a sweeping, sculptural form.</p> <p>After a stroll, travel by suburban train northwest to Omiya, a residential district of Greater Tokyo. Venturing beyond the city centre offers a glimpse into everyday Japanese life.</p> <p>At the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum, you will deepen your appreciation of bonsai — the artful cultivation of miniature trees shaped with patience and precision. During a friendly hands-on workshop, learn the fundamentals of bonsai care and styling, and create your own piece under expert guidance. (While you cannot take your bonsai home due to biosecurity regulations, the knowledge and inspiration are yours to keep.)</p> <p>This evening, gather for a special "Welcome to Japan" dinner at a local restaurant near your hotel.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]
3	Guided tour of Tokyo	<p>Today reveals a captivating blend of old and contemporary Japan, with a focus on refined, small-scale art museums rarely featured in large group tours.</p> <p>Begin at Meiji Jingu, a magnificent Shinto shrine dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken. Set within a tranquil forest in the heart of bustling Tokyo, it offers a serene and atmospheric introduction to Japan's spiritual traditions.</p> <p>From here, stroll along Omotesando, often described as Japan's most fashionable avenue. Lined with striking contemporary architecture and flagship boutiques of leading global brands, it is a showcase of modern design and urban sophistication.</p> <p>Next, visit the intimate Ota Memorial Museum of Art, specialising in exquisite ukiyo-e woodblock prints. This small museum provides a focused and rewarding insight into the artistry and cultural world of Edo-period Japan.</p> <p>Continue to the elegant Nezu Museum, designed by Kengo Kuma. Beyond its superb collection of Japanese and East Asian pre-modern art, the museum is celebrated for its contemplative garden — a perfect setting to pause and reflect.</p> <p>After a short return to the hotel to freshen up, enjoy a relaxed dinner at a local izakaya, experiencing Tokyo's convivial dining culture.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

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4	Guided tour of Hakone	<p>Start with a ride on Japan's impressive shinkansen, the bullet train, for a lovely overnight trip to Hakone, a scenic hot springs resort area located in the mountains near Mt Fuji.</p> <p>With its proximity to Tokyo, Hakone has been a popular destination for Tokyoites seeking rest and rejuvenation for centuries. You tour the general Hakone region by private vehicle, travelling through the Izu-Hakone National Park and, depending on the weather, catching glimpses of Mt Fuji up close. Hakone has some outstanding world-class museums and galleries. You will first visit the Okada Museum of Art, a private art museum, the largest in Hakone by floor area, exhibiting Japanese paintings, oriental ceramics, Asian art and religious art. As well as the artworks, enjoy the beautiful garden and natural surroundings.</p> <p>The next stop is the outstanding Hakone Open-Air Museum with its amazing outdoor sculptures from the likes of Henry Moore and Rodin set against a spectacular backdrop of maple and cherry trees.</p> <p>Tonight, you will stay at one of Hakone's exquisite ryokan with a superb collection of artwork. Featuring onsen hot spring mineral baths, you'll experience Japan's onsen culture firsthand and understand why an onsen visit remains one of the top pastimes of the Japanese.</p> <p>The ryokan will serve a kaiseki multi-course banquet of beautifully presented fresh local produce for dinner.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hakone Nanase [Suite]
5	Morning guided tour of Hakone and transfer to Tokyo	<p>This morning, enjoy a leisurely breakfast at your ryokan before setting out for another rewarding day in Hakone.</p> <p>Begin with a scenic ride on the Hakone Ropeway across the dramatic volcanic landscape of Ōwakudani, where active geothermal vents and steaming sulphur springs reveal the natural forces that feed the region's famous hot spring baths. Continue with a cruise on tranquil Lake Ashi; on a clear day, you may be rewarded with unforgettable views of Mount Fuji rising majestically in the distance.</p> <p>Landing in Hakone-machi, take time to browse local artisan shops and discover Yosegi zaiku, the region's intricate parquetry woodcraft known for its precise geometric patterns and meticulous craftsmanship. You will also visit the Narukawa Art Museum, home to an outstanding collection of Nihonga (traditional Japanese-style painting), beautifully displayed with panoramic views over the lake.</p> <p>After lunch, board the Shinkansen for your return journey to Tokyo. This evening is at leisure — a final opportunity to savour the energy, cuisine and atmosphere of this extraordinary city.</p>	Breakfast	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

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6	Transfer to and guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>This morning, board the Shinkansen once again and travel west to the historic city of Kanazawa, located on the shores of the Sea of Japan. Often referred to as “Little Kyoto,” Kanazawa has preserved a rich heritage of traditional arts, samurai culture, and refined aesthetics.</p> <p>Your first visit is to Kenrokuen Garden, widely regarded as one of Japan’s three most celebrated landscape gardens. Originally developed as the outer garden of Kanazawa Castle in the 17th century, Kenrokuen is admired for its harmonious design and seasonal beauty. Carefully composed ponds, winding paths, elegant stone lanterns, and meticulously maintained trees create a landscape that reflects the classical principles of Japanese garden design.</p> <p>Later, you will be introduced to the Japanese tea ceremony, often referred to as “The Way of Tea.” This refined cultural practice embodies hospitality, mindfulness, and aesthetic simplicity. In a traditional setting, observe the graceful ritual of preparing and serving matcha green tea, and gain insight into the philosophy that has shaped Japanese culture for centuries.</p> <p>After some time to relax back at your hotel, enjoy dinner at a local teppanyaki restaurant, where you will savour premium Wagyu prepared before you on the grill — a memorable culinary experience to end the day.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kanazawa [Superior King or Deluxe Twin]
7	Morning guided tour of Kanazawa	<p>This morning, join your guide for an engaging backstreet walk through the art district of Kanazawa, where contemporary creativity and traditional craftsmanship coexist beautifully. You will visit several small but highly regarded galleries, including the serene D.T. Suzuki Museum, dedicated to the life and philosophy of the influential Buddhist scholar. Its minimalist architecture and contemplative water garden offer a moment of quiet reflection.</p> <p>Kanazawa has long been celebrated for its refined craftsmanship — from delicate Kutani pottery and lustrous silk for kimono to exquisite lacquerware. Throughout the walk, you will gain insight into these enduring artistic traditions and the makers who continue them today.</p> <p>The remainder of the day is at leisure. You may wish to browse elegant craft boutiques, sample seasonal specialties at Omicho Market, or wander the atmospheric streets of the beautifully preserved Higashi Chaya District. Once, impeccably dressed geisha entertained wealthy patrons in its wooden teahouses; today, the district remains a window into Kanazawa’s refined past. Here you can also visit the Kanazawa Yasue Gold Leaf Museum to learn about the city’s most celebrated traditional craft.</p> <p>This evening is free for you to explore further. We are delighted to recommend restaurants to suit your tastes.</p>	Breakfast	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kanazawa [Superior King or Deluxe Twin]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Transfer to and guided tour of Kurashiki	<p>After two enriching days in Kanazawa, you travel by express train to Okayama Prefecture in the western region of Honshu, entering a landscape known for its mild climate, important gardens and vibrant craft traditions.</p> <p>For the next three nights, you will be based in the beautifully preserved merchant town of Kurashiki. Once a prosperous rice distribution centre during the Edo period, Kurashiki's historic Bikan Quarter enchants with white-walled storehouses, black-tiled roofs and willow-lined canals. Stone bridges and traditional façades create one of Japan's most picturesque townscapes, especially lovely in the late afternoon light.</p> <p>Your guided tour introduces the town's rich cultural heritage, including a visit to the acclaimed Ohara Museum of Art — Japan's first museum of Western art. Founded in 1930, its remarkable collection features European masters alongside significant Japanese works, making it an unexpected and fascinating highlight in this historic setting.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel [Corner Deluxe]
9	Guided tour of Adachi Museum	<p>Today, you travel to the rural town of Yasugi on the western side of Japan's main island to visit the celebrated garden of the Adachi Museum of Art. Repeatedly ranked among Japan's finest gardens for many consecutive years, this extraordinary landscape is meticulously maintained as a "living painting." Designed in the shakkei (borrowed scenery) style, the surrounding mountains are seamlessly incorporated into the composition, creating the illusion that nature and garden are one continuous canvas.</p> <p>From perfectly raked white gravel and sculpted pines to seasonal maples and moss gardens, every viewpoint is carefully framed — in fact, the museum's windows are deliberately positioned so that each scene resembles a hanging scroll. Inside, the museum houses an outstanding collection of modern Japanese paintings, including works by Yokoyama Taikan, further reinforcing the dialogue between art and landscape.</p> <p>You will also visit the Shoji Ueda Museum of Photography, dedicated to the internationally acclaimed photographer Shoji Ueda. Set against the dramatic backdrop of Mount Daisen, the museum's striking modern architecture echoes the clean, surreal compositions for which Ueda is known. His distinctive black-and-white photographs — often staged in the sand dunes of nearby Tottori — blend minimalism, humour and avant-garde sensibility, offering a fascinating contrast to the classical aesthetics of the morning's garden visit.</p> <p>Later, you return to Kurashiki to relax before enjoying a light, casual dinner at a local restaurant.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel [Corner Deluxe]

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10	Guided tour of Okayama and Imbe (Bizen)	<p>Today, you travel by local train to the small pottery town of Imbe, the heart of Bizen ware production for over 1,000 years. One of Japan's oldest ceramic traditions, Bizen pottery is celebrated for its unglazed, earthy surfaces and subtle natural ash effects created during long wood-firing. Prized by tea masters and collectors alike, it remains highly sought after both in Japan and internationally.</p> <p>During your visit, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet one of Imbe's most highly regarded master potters, gaining first-hand insight into his craft in his studio and private garden setting. - See the impressive historic climbing kilns (norigama), where generations of artisans have fired their works. - Wander through local galleries and specialist craft shops showcasing both traditional and contemporary Bizen pieces. <p>This afternoon, continue to Okayama for a guided exploration of the magnificent Koraku-en, celebrated as one of Japan's "Three Great Gardens." Completed in 1700, Koraku-en is a superb example of the kaiyū-shiki (scenic promenade) style, where carefully designed pathways reveal a sequence of unfolding views — sweeping lawns, tranquil ponds, teahouses and borrowed vistas — each turn offering a new and perfectly composed scene.</p> <p>Returning to Kurashiki for your final evening, you are free to enjoy dinner at one of the town's many excellent restaurants — an ideal opportunity to savour local cuisine and reflect on the artistic highlights of the past days.</p>	Breakfast	Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel [Corner Deluxe]
11	Transfer to and guided tour of Naoshima	<p>One of the most memorable highlights of your journey awaits today. Travel by ferry across the tranquil Seto Inland Sea to the remarkable art island of Naoshima, where you will spend the next two days.</p> <p>Once home to a handful of quiet fishing villages, Naoshima has been transformed into one of the world's most distinctive art destinations. Through the vision of the Benesse Corporation and the ambitious Benesse Art Site Naoshima, the island now hosts an extraordinary collection of contemporary art, architecture, and site-specific installations created by leading artists and architects from around the world.</p> <p>This afternoon, you will explore the charming Honmura district. Visit the Ando Museum, dedicated to the work of celebrated architect Tadao Ando, and discover several installations from the acclaimed Art House Project, where traditional houses have been transformed into thought-provoking works of art.</p> <p>Tonight, stay at a refined Japanese-style ryokan on the island and experience the warmth and elegance of traditional Japanese hospitality.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Roka [Deluxe Suite]

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12	Guided tour of Naoshima and transfer to Kyoto	<p>Today, after a relaxing breakfast at your ryokan, you continue your exploration of the remarkable art island of Naoshima, where contemporary architecture, landscape and sea views combine in unforgettable ways.</p> <p>During the day, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit Valley Gallery, a serene contemporary art space harmoniously integrated into a quiet natural setting, where large-scale works interact subtly with light, stone and surrounding greenery. - Explore the celebrated Chichu Art Museum, designed by architect Tadao Ando and built largely underground to preserve the island's landscape. Here, natural light is an essential element of the viewing experience, illuminating major works by Claude Monet, James Turrell and Walter De Maria in spaces that heighten contemplation. - Discover the minimalist Lee Ufan Museum, dedicated to the Korean-born artist associated with the Mono-ha movement. The museum's restrained concrete forms and carefully placed stone and steel sculptures create a powerful dialogue between material, emptiness and nature. - Explore the Benesse House Museum and its surrounding outdoor installations, where art is displayed not only in gallery spaces but also along the coastline. Iconic site-specific works — including Yayoi Kusama's famous pumpkin sculptures — punctuate the landscape, blurring the boundary between museum and environment. <p>Throughout the day, you will also enjoy the relaxed pace of island life and sweeping views across the Seto Inland Sea, whose calm waters and scattered islands provide a constantly changing natural backdrop to the art.</p> <p>This evening, you cross back to the mainland and board the shinkansen for your onward journey to Kyoto, your final destination and the cultural heart of Japan.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	The Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo [Deluxe Twin]

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13	Guided tour of Arashiyama	<p>With 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Kyoto is the historic heart of Japan's culture and the custodian of many of its most enduring traditions. Established as the imperial capital in 794, Kyoto remains unrivalled for its concentration of exquisite temple gardens, refined architecture and living artistic heritage.</p> <p>Today you explore the scenic western district of Arashiyama, where mountains, river and temple landscapes combine in perfect harmony. Here you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discover superb examples of the classic "stroll" garden at Tenryu-ji, a UNESCO-listed Zen temple whose 14th-century pond garden masterfully incorporates borrowed scenery from the surrounding hills. - Wander through the famous Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, where towering bamboo stalks filter the light into a soft, otherworldly glow. - Enjoy a traditional Kyoto lunch highlighting delicately prepared tofu dishes — a local specialty rooted in Zen Buddhist cuisine. - Visit the iconic Kinkaku-ji, widely known as the Golden Pavilion. Its upper stories, shimmering in gold leaf and reflected in the mirror-like pond below, create one of Japan's most celebrated and photogenic views. <p>This evening is free for you to explore Kyoto's remarkable culinary scene, with an abundance of restaurants offering everything from refined kaiseki dining to casual local favourites.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	The Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo [Deluxe Twin]

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14	Guided tour of Kyoto and Miho Museum	<p>Today you visit the remarkable Miho Museum, where art, architecture and landscape are brought together in a truly immersive experience. Designed by internationally acclaimed architect I. M. Pei, the museum is discreetly embedded within a forested hillside, preserving the surrounding natural environment.</p> <p>Approached via a dramatic tunnel and suspension bridge, the building gradually reveals itself — its glass and steel roofline rising lightly above the trees. Much of the structure is hidden underground, allowing the mountain landscape to remain dominant. The museum houses an exceptional private collection of approximately 2,000 works, including antiquities from ancient civilisations across Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The interplay of natural light, clean geometric forms and seasonal scenery makes the visit as much about space and atmosphere as about the artworks themselves.</p> <p>Returning to Kyoto, your afternoon guided tour uncovers lesser-known treasures beyond the city's iconic landmarks. You will visit a carefully selected temple garden, explore intimate galleries showcasing local artists, and stroll through Kyoto's charming backstreets, where traditional wooden townhouses and small artisan shops preserve the spirit of old Japan.</p> <p>This evening, you gather once more for a special farewell dinner at a contemporary Kyoto cuisine restaurant — a fitting finale that reflects the sophistication and layered history of this extraordinary former capital.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	The Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo [Deluxe Twin]
15	Departure	<p>This morning, after breakfast, your 2027 Garden and Art Tour of Japan comes to a close.</p> <p>You may return to Tokyo by shinkansen or by air for your onward flight home, or depart via Kansai International Airport. We will arrange your transfer to suit your flight schedule, ensuring a smooth and comfortable departure.</p> <p>If you are not quite ready to say farewell to Japan, you may wish to extend your stay. Whether exploring another region, discovering rural landscapes, or delving deeper into art, gardens and traditional culture, we would be delighted to design a personalised post-tour extension tailored especially for you.</p>	Breakfast	

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	Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 14 nights' accommodation listed above ■ Airport meet & greet and hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ Private guide as specified ■ All local transport (train, bus and taxi) ■ All cultural activities and entry fees included in itinerary ■ Pre-paid IC card for local transport with 4,500 yen initial credit ■ Airport transfer from the hotel to the airport in Tokyo or Osaka by public transport on departure ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) ■ Meals as specified with first drink 		
	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 first drink at each meal) ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-lockers, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Tips and gratuities ■ Visa (if required) 		