



Trails of Japan

Discovery Tour | 13 Days | Active

Tokyo - Fuji Five Lakes – Nagano – Snow Monkeys – Takayama -
Kyoto – Koya-san – Osaka

On this exhilarating tour delve deeper into Japan's rich and fascinating past, present and future, covering robot restaurants to tranquil temples and all that is in between.

- Learn the art of Taiko drumming
- Hike around the base of Mt Fuji
- Get up close to the fascinating Snow Monkeys
- Relax in a traditional Onsen
- Experience the speedy bullet train
- Chant with the Buddhist Monks in Koya-san



Trails of Japan tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated on your itinerary
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, meals not included, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Discovery Tours:

Designed for those who wish to be further immersed in the authentic charm of Asia; our Discovery Tours include more cultural and active experiences. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. Our Discovery tours include:

- Cycling and walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

Active Tours:

'Trails of Japan' is an **active** tour. This is one of the most demanding trips Wendy Wu Tours offers. As a whole, this itinerary requires a high level of fitness.

- Sightseeing often be for extended periods of time on foot and occasionally at an incline
- Trekking around the base of Mt Fuji will be for approximately 4 hours
- You will be to be able to get on and off the boat without assistance on Lake Ashi
- There will be a half day cycling tour of Kyoto covering a distance of approximately 10 Kilometres

Of course, our National Escorts will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our Discovery Tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Itinerary – Trails of Japan

Days 1-2: Tokyo

Meals included: None

Fly overnight to Tokyo, the capital of Japan and transfer approximately 1.5 hours to your hotel. The remainder of your day is at leisure.

Please note: Early check in is not included today. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your reservations consultant. Transfers will differ depending on group size, but you may share a coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour.



Destination Information

Tokyo – One of the world's most cutting edge capital cities, Tokyo is a city of contrasts, famous for its neon-lit landscape, towering skyscrapers, peaceful shrines and lovingly tended gardens. Although long the political and cultural centre of Japan, Tokyo became the official capital when the Meiji Emperor moved it to Tokyo in 1867.

Day 3: Tokyo

Meals included: Breakfast

Tokyo is the ultimate 24-hour city, but look behind its frantic, high-tech frontage and you'll find plenty of tranquil backstreets and old temples to explore. This morning, you will be picked up by coach for a city tour; you will spend approximately 3 to 4 hours on foot sightseeing. Head to the 1st observatory of the Tokyo Skytree for panoramic views over the city before taking a wander through the district of Asakusa, stopping at the Sensoji Temple and Nakamise shopping street. Take a look at the famous Shibuya Crossing, the Meiji Shrine and the vibrant district of Harajuku. Finally, visit the Robot Restaurant for a surreal sci-fi experience. Please note dinner is not included in the Robot Restaurant, your visit is to experience the show, your guide will be happy to recommend restaurants for your evening meal.



Destination Information

Tokyo Skytree – The tallest structure in Japan and the tallest tower in the world; Tokyo Skytree is predominantly a television and radio broadcast tower and is earthquake resistant.

Sensoji Temple – An ancient Buddhist Temple and the oldest in Tokyo; the Sensoji temple was originally founded in the 7th century. The temple adorns an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

Meiji Shrine – Located in a huge evergreen forest the Meiji Shrine is dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken.

Robot restaurant – For a futuristic, neon, cabaret style experience head to the Robot Restaurant found in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo.

Day 4: Tokyo

Meals included: Breakfast

In the morning, take part in a traditional Japanese drumming (Taiko) class. Next, visit Tokyo's electronics district to see the neon bill boarded streets and stop for a drink at the Maid Café, embracing Tokyo's latest themed café craze. This afternoon, explore the Edo Tokyo Museum or the Tokyo National Museum (which you visit is dependent on tour departure date) and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

For May and September departures only: Tickets to a Sumo tournament are included. Many of Japan's most ancient traditions are preserved in the sport; the ritual involved in the performance is just as fascinating to watch as the sport itself.

Destination Information

Taiko – Using large drums, Taiko is an ancient Japanese form of percussion which has become a popular musical art form involving tightly choreographed movements.

Maid Café – One of Japan's more bizarre themed establishments is the Maid Café, where waitresses dressed in maid costumes serve your drinks, a popular craze in Tokyo at the moment.

Day 5: Tokyo – Fuji Five Lakes

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

This morning, transfer 2.5 hours to Mount Fuji to take a 3-hour trek around the base of this iconic mountain. You will take an easy hike through alpine forest, across meadows and around lakes at the base of this impressive mountain. Take a short transfer to your hotel and check in for your overnight stay.

In the Fuji Five Lakes area we use a selection of hotels, some of which are more traditional in style. The rooms in these hotels typically feature Japanese elements. You may sleep on a futon with the mattress lying directly on a tatami mat floor. This is an opportunity to experience a more authentic style of Japanese accommodation.



Destination Information

Mount Fuji – At 3,776m, Mount Fuji is the highest of Japan's mountains and an iconic symbol of the country. Mount Fuji is notoriously shy and is often enveloped by clouds.

Fuji Five Lakes - Formed by previous Mount Fuji eruptions, the Fuji Five Lakes is a region at the base of Mount Fuji made up of five beautiful lakes.

Day 6: Fuji Five Lakes - Nagano

Meals included: Breakfast

Travel to Matsumoto, a journey of 3.5 hours, and explore the magnificent Matsumoto Castle. Continue to Nagano, stopping in Yudanaka to visit the resident Japanese Snow Monkeys at Jigokudani Yaen-Koen (Monkey Park). You will walk through the forested valley, from the bus park it takes between 25 to 35 minutes along paths, occasionally on an incline, to the main pool where the monkeys bathe. Accustomed to humans, the monkeys can be observed from very close and almost completely ignore their human guests.

**Destination Information**

Matsumoto Castle – Known as the ‘Crow Castle’ due to its dark black exterior, the Matsumoto Castle dates back to the 16th century and is the oldest wooden castle in Japan.

Nagano - The host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics, Nagano is the main access point for the Japanese Alps. In the winter a blanket of snow covers the rural landscape you will travel through to reach this picturesque mountain city.

Jigokudani Yaen-Koen – Home to Japanese Macaques, also known as Snow Monkeys, Jigokudani literally means ‘hell’s valley’. Named this because of the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the ground. It is in the baths of this hot water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak. The monkeys live in large social groups, and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions.

Day 7: Nagano - Takayama

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

This morning, travel 2 hours to Hotaka to ride the Shin-Hotaka Ropeway into the Japanese Alps. You will reach the observation platform at 2,156 metres high to get stunning views of the surrounding mountains. Drive 1.5 hours to Takayama, where you will have some free time to explore Kamisannomachi Street and sample the street food on offer (at your own expense). Check in to your hotel and enjoy a traditional dinner including Hida Beef.

Please note the ropeway may be closed due to strong winds, if this is the case, you will continue directly to Takayama where alternative sightseeing will be arranged.

Tonight’s accommodation is a Ryokan, a traditional Japanese inn, where you will find Tatami (Straw mat) flooring and Futon bedding to sleep on. There will be an Onsen hot spring bath at the hotel for you to relax in and experience this traditional Japanese pastime.

Destination Information

Takayama - Boasting one of Japan’s most atmospheric townscapes, the layout of the town dates back to the 17th century and is home to much Meiji architecture.

Day 8: Takayama – Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast

Today, take the bullet train to Kyoto. The journey consists of two trains, firstly the Limited express, which takes approximately 2 hours 20 minutes to Nagoya, before changing to the Shinkansen bullet train for the 40-minute journey to Kyoto. On arrival this afternoon, visit the Fushimi Inari Shrine (Taisha) and Kiyomizu Temple. Next, take a stroll around the old neighbourhoods of Higashiyama and Gion, the geisha district with a stop at Gion Corner.



Please note: Your luggage will be transferred separately and will not arrive until the following day so you will need to pack a separate overnight bag for your first night in Kyoto.

Please note: Kiyomizu Temple is undergoing renovations which may last until 2020. You can still visit the temple and the shrines around it and your touring will not be affected. If you require any further details, please visit the link: <http://www.kiyomizudera.or.jp/en/news/>

Destination Information

Kyoto – was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years until 1867 when it was moved to Tokyo. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto and in nearby Nara, including old shrines and temples, screen paintings, beautiful gardens, and statues of Buddha.

Fushimi Inari Taisha – Famous for its brilliant red traditional torii gates, Fushimi Inari shrine sits at the base of the mountain also called Inari and is the head shrine for 40,000 Inari shrines throughout the country.

Kiyomizu Temple – Meaning ‘Pure Water Temple’, Kiyomizu is one of the most celebrated temples of Japan and houses the Jishu Shrine dedicated to the deity of love.

Day 9: Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast

This morning, take a half day tour of the city by bicycle. You will transfer by coach from the hotel to Kinkakuji, the ‘Golden Pavilion’ where your cycle tour will begin. Your next stop will be Japan’s most famous classical garden – Ryoanji, continuing to the Arashiyama district where your cycle tour ends. You will be provided with a helmet for today’s cycling tour. Your group will be divided into smaller groups of approximately 6 people and each small group will be accompanied by a guide. The tour will cover a distance of approximately 10 kilometres at a leisurely pace. This afternoon, you will have some free time to explore the Bamboo forest before witnessing the rituals involved in the preparation and pouring of matcha tea in a traditional tea ceremony.

Destination Information

Kinkakuji Temple - is a Buddhist temple and is an excellent example of Japanese garden design. The structure is a brilliant golden hue colour and is very minimalistic.

Ryoanji Temple - is a Zen temple which is renowned for its garden which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles.

Arashiyama – Famed for the Bamboo grove, Arashiyama is a sightseeing district of Kyoto filled with temples and shrines.

Day 10: Kyoto – Koya-san

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

This morning, explore the craft of Kimono creation at Nishijin Textile Centre, then continue your tour learning the art of Origami and trying on kimonos. Transfer to Koya-San for your overnight stay in a 13th century temple in a traditional tatami room. The journey is approximately 3 hours.

The temple where you will lodge tonight is staffed by monks who generally do not speak English. Accommodation is traditional and basic; single mattresses will be laid on traditional tatami mats, tatami mat floors are not hard and mattresses are designed for comfortable sleep. The doors to rooms are made from rice paper so noise will travel and cannot be locked and rooms are individually heated but hallways are not. There will be shared bathrooms with shower and toilet facilities. The evening meal is a Buddhist vegetarian dinner, known as Shojin Ryori and is served promptly at 18:00. Your bedding in your room will be prepared by the monks whilst you are at dinner. The evening is free for quiet reflection in your room, please note here are no TVs on the premises.

Destination Information

Koya-San – known primarily as the centre of the Shingon sub-section of Buddhism, Koya-San sits in the mountains and is the ideal spot to take a glimpse of Japan's traditional religious life.

Day 11: Koyasan - Osaka

Meals included: Breakfast

Rise early this morning to join the monks in their daily morning prayers before a traditional breakfast. Take a walking tour of Koya-San visiting Kongobuji and travel by chartered coach to visit Okunoin. Travel 2.5 hours to Osaka this afternoon and check into your hotel for the next 2 nights.

**Destination Information**

Kongobuji Temple – dating back to 16th century, the Kongobuji Temple is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. The interior of the building is adorned with paintings of cranes and there are sliding doors throughout.

Okunoin Cemetery – home to Kobo Daishi's mausoleum (founder of Shingon Buddhism), Okunoin Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Japan, with over 200,000 tombstones, as many wished to be buried near Kobo Daishi.

Osaka - Japan's third largest city. What Osaka lacks in sightseeing locations, it makes up for with its flamboyance, fun loving people and amazing food.

Day 12: Osaka

Meals included: Breakfast

Today, drive 2 hours to Himeji to visit the 17th century Himeji Castle. The castle is largely in its original condition, so please use common sense and be mindful of your step when walking about the castle. You will have to remove your shoes before walking along some of the wooden floors and there are some steep wooden steps to reach certain areas. After the reopening in March 2015, Himeji Castle has welcomed a large number of visitors. As such, they now issue numbered tickets to enter the Main Keep to visitors in order to limit the number of people



who can enter the Main Keep reducing congestion, waiting time, and to protect the cultural properties. Please note this means that there may be cases where some visitors are not allowed to enter the Main Keep. Continue on to a sake brewery to learn about the brewing process and enjoy some tasters. Travel back to Osaka stopping at the bright lights of the Dotonbori district, enjoy some free time here before taking the coach back to the hotel.

Destination Information

Himeji - The second largest city of Hyogo Prefecture after Kobe, with approximately half a million inhabitants. Most famous for its magnificent castle.

Himeji Castle - Widely considered as Japan's most magnificent castle for its imposing size and beauty. The well-preserved castle is both a national and world heritage listed treasure. Himeji Castle has never been destroyed by war, earthquake or fire and survives to this day as one of the country's twelve original castles.

Sake Brewery – Sake is the national alcohol of Japan; a tour of the brewery offers the chance to learn about the manufacturing processes from the 1950's to the present day.

Dotonbori district – Historically a theatre district and still a popular entertainment area today the Dotonbori district offer an eccentric and electric atmosphere.

Day 13: Depart Osaka

Meals included: Breakfast

Transfer 1 hour to the airport, according to the time of your international flight departure. Any time before your flight is at leisure.

Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not included in our Trails of Japan tour. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in Osaka, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Trails of Japan Travel Information

Visas

A visa is not required for UK citizens visiting Japan.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in Japan

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, most famous being Udon and Soba. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure. Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Japan. Food is an important element of Japanese culture. It is a time for families and friends to come together and much of family life revolves around the dinner table. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get practicing as cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Breakfast will mostly be buffet style but may be a set-menu. Lunches are mostly pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually buffet-style, featuring a wide selection of high quality Japanese and Western dishes, but may occasionally be a set-menu. We usually find this style of dining suits the wide and varied tastes of our customers on tour. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes. All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you need to inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in the UK.

On some days where lots of sights are covered, dinner times may be early and your tour group may head directly to the restaurant after sightseeing without stopping at your hotel to freshen up.

Evenings at leisure

Due to the more intrepid nature of our Discovery clients, and to give you more flexibility and choice when travelling on selected Discovery tours; we have carefully balanced special highlight meals with evenings at leisure so that you can explore the many culinary delights that Japan has to offer. Alternatively, you can use this time to enjoy the facilities of your hotel. Your National Escort will be happy to provide you with advice about good places to eat, and assist in the booking of transportation to get you there (at your own expense).

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. In the Fuji Five Lakes area, hotels tend to be more traditional in style and culture. In this area, you may be asked to take your shoes off at the door and store them in a secure locker – this is very traditional Japanese culture.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Japan.

Please note that in Japan hotel rooms and bathrooms are renowned for being small. Standard single rooms are usually smaller than a standard double or twin room, contain one small double bed (or one single bed), and are designed for one person to use. For your comfort, we have selected to book twin rooms for single use on all of our escorted group tours. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Hotels in Japan often do not have porters and you will be required to carry your own luggage. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/local guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Please note: On this tour, you will stay at a Ryokan, a traditional Japanese Onsen hotel, where you will find Tatami (Straw mat) flooring and comfortable Futon bedding to sleep on. You will also stay for 1 night in traditional Buddhist temple accommodation where you will be provided with single mattresses to sleep on Tatami mat floors; bathrooms here will be shared.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in Japan are extremely well maintained and are comparatively smooth with the rest of Asia.

Bullet trains: Second class reserved seats are booked for our groups on bullet trains; there will be toilet facilities on board. Due to the limited space on bullet trains, a separate luggage transfer service will be arranged for all suitcases. You will need to pack a separate overnight bag to carry on the train as your suitcase will not arrive until the following day after a bullet train journey. Your guide will indicate when you will need to prepare for this throughout your tour.

Development in Japan

Japan is a developed country and as such matches the west in modernity and technological advances. Japan is an extremely safe country and takes great responsibility in maintaining high safety standards.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 24 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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