

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Japan's Cultural Treasures

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa

Japan's Cultural Treasures

Small Group Adventure

Japan: Tokyo, Hakone, Kanazawa, Kyoto

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

15 days starting from \$6,395

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

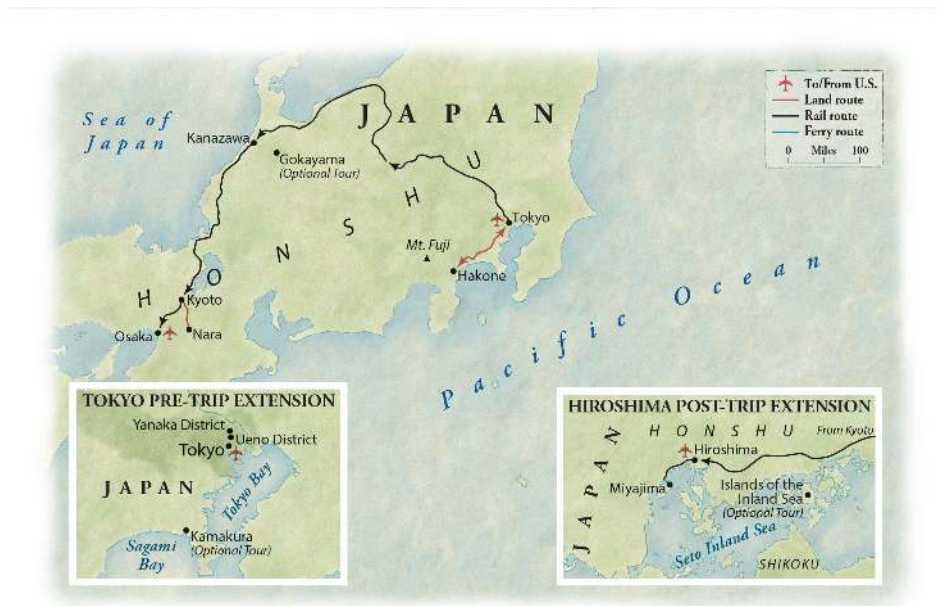
For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/jpn2025pricing

A colorful Shinto festival winds its way past neon lights and Tokyo skyscrapers ... a modern bullet train speeds past a farmer tending his rice paddy ... a well-dressed businessman stops in a Buddhist temple to light incense ... majestic Mount Fuji provides an iconic backdrop for Hakone, where locals relax in volcanic hot springs. Join us to explore more than 2,000 years of Japanese history and culture, from ultra-modern Tokyo through the former imperial capital of Kyoto.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 13 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation, including 3 rail transfers on bullet and local trains
- 29 meals—13 breakfasts, 9 lunches, and 7 dinners
- 13 small group activities
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 4 locations in 14 days with 3 train rides and one overland drive of 4.5 hours

Physical requirements: You must be able to walk up to 5 miles unassisted each day over city streets, through gardens and markets, and within temples and shrines in which the ground may be uneven and stairways may lack handrails. Luggage porters are unavailable at hotels and on trains.

Flight time: Travel time will be 10-21 hours and will most likely have one to three connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/jpn

JAPAN: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Visit a small mountain town and experience **A Day in the Life** of Ashigara. This is a unique opportunity to witness one of Japan's rural towns. We will learn about the customs of the town and take part in a cooking lesson with local residents. We'll also get to know a Japanese family during a **Home-Hosted Visit**.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Get a fuller picture of Japan when we learn about the often misunderstood profession of geisha from the madam of a geisha house in Hakone.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Tokyo, Japan
2-4	Tokyo
5-6	Hakone
7-9	Kanazawa
10-14	Kyoto
15	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Tokyo: Ancient & Modern Traditions

PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,095**

Hiroshima: City of Peace

POST-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,795**

New! Osaka to Hiroshima by Bullet Train

POST-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$2,795**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Tokyo** before your Tokyo pre-trip extension or before your main adventure from **\$320** per room, per night

Japan's Cultural Treasures

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Tokyo: Ancient & Modern Traditions*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Tokyo, Japan

Day 3 Explore Tokyo • Visit Bonsai Garden
• Tsukiji Outer Market visit

Day 4 Tokyo • Explore Yanaka district •
Visit Ueno Park

Day 5 Tokyo • Optional Kamakura tour •
Begin main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Afternoon/Evening: Depart the U.S. today on your overnight flight to Tokyo, Japan.

Day 2 Arrive Tokyo, Japan

- Destination: Tokyo
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Afternoon: An O.A.T. representative will greet us at the Tokyo airport upon arrival and assist with your transfer to our hotel in Tokyo. There we'll meet our Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers, including those who took our optional *Tokyo: Ancient & Modern Traditions* pre-trip extension and those who arrived early in Tokyo before the main adventure.

Dinner: On your own tonight. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend a few of his or her favorite local restaurants to try.

Evening: On your own. This is a great chance to begin getting acquainted with the city, or you may choose to stay in and eat at the hotel and rest after your flight.

Day 3 Explore Tokyo • Meet former sumo wrestler

- Destination: Tokyo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk after breakfast. Then, we'll return to our hotel for a Welcome Briefing.

After the briefing, we'll drive to witness a demonstration of sumo wrestling by two former wrestlers, beginning with a ritual of purification and eventually engaging in combat. Sumo has been the most popular form of sports entertainment in Japan for the last 1,000 years, making it integral to local culture. During an

interactive demonstration, which we'll have the opportunity to participate in if we would like, we'll learn about the history of sumo, the rules, as well as its connection to the Shinto religion. Throughout our conversation, we'll have the opportunity to ask questions of these impressive athletes and learn about their own perspectives on the sport.

Lunch: We'll stay on at the sumo house and enjoy *Chanko*, a hot pot dish traditionally consumed by sumo wrestlers to maintain their competitive physique. This hearty soup typically features a chicken broth base, large quantities of protein, and vegetables such as daikon and bok choy. To increase the calorie intake, wrestlers typically pair this meal with large quantities of rice. This is a unique opportunity to eat the food of choice for sumo wrestlers right alongside them and ask any questions we may have.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll sit down with one of the former wrestlers to discuss his experience and to learn sumo traditions—an exclusive O.A.T. feature.

Next, we'll visit Meiji Shrine, a Shinto holy place. The shrine was erected in honor of Emperor Meiji, who came into power in the 19th century when the shogunate powers fell. It was under his leadership that Japan adopted modern customs and became a serious world power. As we explore the tranquil surroundings, we may even witness one of the shrine's daily Shinto ceremonies.

After our explorations here, we'll head back to the hotel, and you'll have the remainder of the afternoon free to explore as you wish. Perhaps you'd like to get a taste of different sections of the city, in which case you may want to join the 14 million Tokyo residents who use the subway. Ask your Trip Experience Leader how you can obtain a pre-paid pass called "*Suika*." For a more relaxed afternoon, perhaps you'd

like to learn a few Japanese phrases from your Trip Experience Leader and try them out as you wander in and out of shops.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Evening: You may choose to join your Trip Experience Leader for an elective walk to visit a local Izakaya, a casual Japanese bar that also serves snacks (if a local Izakaya is not within comfortable walking distance of the hotel, your Trip Experience Leader will recommend that you enjoy an Izakaya experience on another evening of your adventure).

Day 4 Tokyo • Taiko drumming experience

• Explore Asakusa

- Destination: Tokyo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Activity Note: Because of limited space, we recommend you pack an overnight bag on Day 4 for the next two nights in Hakone. On Day 5, the rest of your luggage will be transferred to the following hotel in Kanazawa. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for details.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a culturally immersive experience: riding the Tokyo subway. We'll join residents of the city on their morning commutes, participating in one of the world's busiest public transportation systems. Our journey will take us to a local taiko studio.

Taiko are traditional drums that have been used throughout Japan's history—from setting the beat for marching armies to adding a tempo to boisterous festivals. Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by the taiko drum master. We'll learn from the master about the significance of

this musical instrument in local culture, and later observe a short performance. We'll even get to try our hand at drumming with a short intensive introduction to the art form followed by time to perform patterns and rhythms on our own, as well as within the group. After our immersive musical experience, we'll then hear from the drum master about their personal relationship with drumming, as well as the concerns about keeping this longstanding tradition alive.

Next, we'll walk around the well-known district of Asakusa. As we explore this part of the city, we'll see where old meets new. While the appearance of Asakusa retains its historical charm, we'll find modern innovations in the district's shopping area. We'll stroll down streets that host more than 100 shops, which sell everything from kitchen appliances to hand-cut glass. We'll also visit the Asakusa Temple, the oldest temple in Tokyo, which will give us some architectural and cultural insight to this ancient city.

Lunch: On your own in Asakusa. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide recommendations for some local spots to grab a bite.

Afternoon: You have the option to continue exploring Asakusa with your Trip Experience Leader, or return to the hotel by subway. For those who stay in Asakusa, you might choose to visit one of the many historical shrines and temples in the area or perhaps visit a nearby rice cracker shop.

Dinner: We'll gather for a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring traditional Japanese food such as *sashimi*, local vegetables, *tempura*, and more (menu may change depending on location of our Tokyo hotel).

Evening: Free to spend as you'd like.

Day 5 Travel overland to Hakone • *A Day in the Life of Ashigara*

- Destination: Hakone
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Recove Hakone or similar

Activity Note: Please pack a smaller, carry-on size bag for our two nights in Hakone. Our larger luggage will be sent to Kanazawa ahead of us as the bullet train we will take on Day 7 has limited space.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to the mountain region of Hakone, located about 55 miles southwest of Tokyo.

Along the way, we'll make a stop in Ashigara, where we'll participate in ***A Day in the Life***. This is a great chance to see what life is like in the Japanese countryside, where day-to-day rhythms continue on much as they have for decades. Our first stop is to a local market run by the town, where we'll get a sense of the various types of fruits, vegetables, and traditional snacks that are sold there.

We'll next continue on to the Seto Community House. The house previously belonged to the Setos, a Samurai family that helped lead and protect the town for more than 300 years. Under the Samurai system, locals were required to pay a "resident rice tax" to the Samurai family in exchange for this protection. In 1955, a descendent of the Seto family donated the house to Ashigara, and since then it has been used as a community center. The grounds feature a children's playground and watermill, and the house often hosts seasonal festivals and local artists' exhibitions. Despite these changes in function, you can see still a prominent vestige of the house's past: a special front gate,

beyond which no one besides the Samurai and his family were allowed to pass. Happily, today the center is now open to all.

During our time here, we'll be greeted by a group of local women and given a tour of the house. Then, it's time to roll up our sleeves learn how to make a traditional Japanese meal. With the local women as our instructors, we'll learn how to properly wash and cook rice using firewood, and then prepare our very own rice balls. We'll also help make an authentic miso soup—all in the 300-year-old kitchen of Seto Community House.

Lunch: We'll sit down with our hosts for a lunch of rice balls and miso soup, served with fresh and pickled vegetables. With the help and translation of our Trip Experience Leader, we'll chat with the women about their childhoods in Ashigara, their daily routines now, and their concerns about the town's traditions fading away in the face of modernity. Our small group size allows us this in-depth, culturally immersive experience.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll enjoy some free time to explore the grounds and the village beyond it. You might pause to pay your respects at the village temple and graveyard, or simply admire the scene of a quiet country rice paddy.

We'll bid our hosts goodbye and continue on to Hakone, checking into our hotel upon arrival. You'll have some free time to relax and settle in before dinner. Perhaps you'd like to enjoy the on-site *onsen*, a traditional Japanese bathing facility featuring hot spring water.

Dinner: At the hotel, featuring traditional dishes.

Evening: The evening is free for your own discoveries.

Day 6 Hakone • Boat ride on Lake Ashi • Wood workshop visit • Conversation about Japanese geisha

- Destination: Hakone
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Recove Hakone or similar

Activity Note: Alternative activities may be substituted for some of today's visits depending on weather conditions.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll drive to Lake Ashi, a scenic crater lake situated along a wall of the Mount Hakone caldera. This caldera is a complex volcano which last erupted approximately 1,000 years ago. The lake and surrounding area draw many visitors each year for a number of recreational activities, such as hiking, boating, camping, and of course, fishing. We'll set out on a boat ride (weather permitting) to admire the mountain scenery and learn about important landmarks in the area, such as the sacred Kuzuryu Shrine.

Afterwards, we'll disembark and board the bus for a short ride to *Hamamatsuya*, a workshop specializing in wooden handicrafts. There, we'll meet with the owner of the shop, who is the fourth generation in his family to carry on this well-established business. We'll see the creation of the elaborate woodwork of *Hakone Yosegi Zaiku*, a special product of Hakone featuring complex inlaid designs using varying shades of wood. After the demonstration, we'll have the opportunity to ask the owner any questions we may have about this exquisite artistry.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hakone.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll walk to a nearby hotel. Here, we'll meet a local madam, or "mother"—a woman responsible for the

management and development of a group of local geisha—who will share with us the intricacies of the world of geisha. While some Westerners confuse geisha with prostitutes, our speaker will break down these misconceptions and stereotypes. A geisha is a woman who is highly trained in the arts of music, dance, and entertaining. We will learn how women wishing to become a geisha must spend many years learning to play various traditional instruments, sing, and dance, as well as the art of being the perfect hostess—which includes storytelling and attentiveness.

Our speaker will tell us the history of the geisha and how its popularity as a profession has dwindled in recent years. The population of active geisha in Japan has decreased from around 17,000 in the 1970s to just around 500 today. During this conversation, we'll have the opportunity to ask the mother geisha any questions we may have. Afterwards, we'll enjoy a performance of traditional geisha dancing.

Then we'll drive to our hotel, where we'll enjoy free time for the remainder of the afternoon. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Of course, you're in the land of hot springs, so should you be interested in a soak, Hakone is a wonderful place to indulge in this relaxing pastime.

Dinner: We'll regroup at the hotel restaurant for dinner.

Evening: After dinner, your Trip Experience Leader will provide introductions to Japanese culture through practices such as *origami* (the art of paper folding), *kendama* (a traditional toy game), and *shuji* (Japanese calligraphy). If time permits we may even have the chance to learn a local dance from your Trip Experience Leader.

Day 7 Hakone • Overland to Tokyo • Bullet train to Kanazawa

- Destination: Kanazawa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Kanazawa or similar

Activity Note: Find the rest of your luggage waiting at our hotel in Kanazawa this afternoon.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll leave our hotel and drive to the train station in Tokyo, where we'll board a bullet train—the legendary high-speed train service that revolutionized travel in Japan.

The Japanese call this train the *shinkansen*. It is one of the world's finest quick-transit trains, and still among the fastest trains in the world, traveling at speeds of up to 200 mph. Prior to boarding, you will need to stand at a precise location indicated by your coach and seat accommodations. The train stops exactly where indicated and sure enough, your coach will be right in front of you. After boarding the bullet train at Tokyo Station, we'll enjoy views of Japan's rolling countryside and modern cityscapes on our journey to Kanazawa.

Lunch: On your own today at your convenience. We suggest doing as the Japanese do: Buy a packed lunch (called *eki-ben*) in the station and enjoy it on the train. *Eki-ben* lunches are one of the attractions of train travel in Japan and usually include rice or noodles, vegetables, and sushi or meat.

Afternoon: We arrive at Kanazawa station and transfer to our hotel. After checking in, we'll take an orientation walk. Then, the rest of your afternoon is free for your own discoveries.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: We'll return to our hotel, after which you are free to explore the surrounding area on your own or head back to your room to retire for the night.

Day 8 Kanazawa • Visit Kenrokuen Garden • Explore Omicho Market • Visit gold leaf factory

- Destination: Kanazawa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Kanazawa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin our exploration of Kanazawa with a panoramic tour of this historic city.

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Kanazawa was a prosperous castle town in the domain of Kaga, ruled by the Maeda Family, and it has been one of the cultural centers of Japan ever since. Located on the coast of the Japan Sea, Kanazawa was spared much of the destruction that World War II brought to the country. It is famous today for its unique architecture, exquisite Kaga-style handcrafts—including silk-dyeing and lacquerware—delicate regional cuisine, and the Kenrokuen Garden, one of the most treasured in Japan. We start our tour with a visit to this very garden, opened to the public in 1875 and one of the most visited garden spots in all of Japan. Here, we'll have the opportunity to admire garden landmarks such as the mid-18th century Kaisekito Pagoda, the two-legged stone lantern of Kotoji Touro, and the placid waters of Kasumi Pond.

Then, it's on to the Omicho Market. This spacious, indoor market is comprised of stalls selling fresh produce, seafood, meat, and various specialty dishes. We'll peruse the offerings, sample local cuisine, and mix and mingle with local shoppers.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll walk around the Higashi Chaya District, a traditional neighborhood known for its teahouses. We'll then head to our next destination to experience one of Kanazawa's most famous art traditions—gold leaf. We'll visit the headquarters of Hakuichi, a local company famous for its gold leaf production—and we'll meet one of the experts who will give us an introduction to this intricate craft. We'll then get a hands-on lesson and learn how to apply the shimmering foils ourselves, creating postcards to take with us. Afterwards, we'll visit Hakuichi's showroom to view the gold-leaf artworks on display, including an impressive golden Samurai costume.

You have the rest of the afternoon to make your own discoveries. One site you may want to visit for the remainder of the afternoon is 16th-century Kanazawa Castle, the former headquarters of Kaga Domain, a feudal estate in Edo period Japan. The castle is built on the highest ground between the Sai and Asano Rivers, giving it a strategic advantage in times of defense.

Dinner: On your own tonight—your Trip Experience Leader will recommend some of his or her favorite local restaurants.

Evening: You're free to make your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll observe the local nightlife on an evening stroll, take advantage of the hotel amenities, or retire early to rest up for tomorrow.

Day 9 Kanazawa • Optional Gokayama tour

- Destination: Kanazawa
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Kanazawa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today you have the freedom to spend a day in Kanazawa as you wish, making your own discoveries in this historic city. Or you can join us for an optional full-day excursion to Gokayama, a mountain village—and a UNESCO World Heritage Site—in the forested countryside outside of Kanazawa.

Because of its relative isolation, this area developed independently of the rest of Japanese society, resulting in a unique culture and lifestyle. In addition to creating their own dances, festivals, and traditions, residents developed a distinctive architectural style known as *gassho-zukuri*. Characterized by steeply pitched thatched roofs that are both striking and functional, these dwellings are considered to be some of the most efficient farmhouses in Japan—and we'll discover why as we explore the 20 or so houses of the Ainokura district this morning.

After our discoveries here, we'll learn the art of *mochitsuki*, the traditional ceremony of rice-cake making, using a wooden hammer to achieve the correct texture. *Mochi* is made of *mochigome*, a short-grain glutinous rice and can be served in a variety of flavors. Afterward, we'll enjoy our hard work and indulge in this national delicacy. Then, we'll visit a workshop and local community center to see how *washi*—a thick, fibrous paper made from mulberry bark—is created. This traditional paper is known to last 1,000 years. After learning how it's done, we'll try our hand at creating *washi* paper postcards, personal creations we'll be able to take home with us.

Lunch: For those who do not take the optional tour, lunch is on your own today. Be sure to check with your Trip Experience Leader beforehand for suggestions. For those who do join the optional tour, we'll enjoy a traditional lunch of *soba* (buckwheat noodles) at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, those on our optional tour continue on to a local *Gasshō-zukuri*-style house in the area, known for its thatched, steeply slanted roof. During our visit here, we'll learn more about the history and culture of Gokayama, and enjoy a traditional dance performance called *Kokiriko*, given by a local family. Our group will be welcomed and encouraged to participate.

The remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries.

Dinner: On your own tonight. Perhaps you'd like to browse the surrounding area to seek out a local specialty.

Evening: You're free to spend the evening as you wish.

Day 10 Kanazawa • Home-Hosted Visit: Tea with a local family • Train to Kyoto

- Destination: Kyoto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Vista Premio Kyoto Nagomitei or similar

Activity Note: Accommodations in Kyoto are quite small and often not wide enough to fully open a suitcase. Today's **Home-Hosted Visit** will not include lunch with the family, lunch will be included at a local restaurant following our visit.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll depart for a **Home-Hosted Visit** with local families who live in various sections of the city. This is a rare opportunity to witness the everyday lives of typical residents of Kanazawa and glimpse authentic Japanese culture. Some of our hosts are accomplished tea ceremony masters, are skilled in Japanese calligraphy, cultivate *bonsai* trees, or fold *origami*, and will be happy to share these talents with you.

During our enlightening cultural exchange, we'll have the opportunity to browse family photos, learn about our hosts, and converse about various Japanese traditions over a cup of tea, a tradition that is central to Japanese culture. Your hosts may or may not speak some English, but you will find that some forms of communication are universal. Get creative with hand gestures, or perhaps employ some of the new phrases you learned during your time in Japan.

We'll then take taxis to Kanazawa train station.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in the station.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll embark on the train ride to Kyoto. Kyoto was Japan's imperial capital from the eighth to 19th centuries. It remains an important cultural center—and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site—and we'll have five full days to explore its many wonders.

After settling in to our hotel, you may join our Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk around the hotel's vicinity.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: After dinner, you're free to make your own discoveries or retire to your room.

Day 11 Kyoto • Arashiyama Bamboo Grove • Kinkakuji • Nijo Castle

- Destination: Kyoto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Vista Premio Kyoto Nagomitei or similar

Activity Note: Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, Kinkakuji Temple, and Nijo Castle are popular sites and can be crowded.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head to Arashiyama today. Upon arrival, we'll set off on walk through Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, where we'll see massive bamboo stalks. This is one of the most photographed sites in the city, and visitors come from all over the world to be dwarfed by these towering plants. Our morning visit will give us an opportunity to enjoy the grove during a quieter time of day with fewer crowds.

We'll next drive to visit Kinkakuji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The striking architecture of Kinkakuji, also known as the Temple of the Golden Pavilion, dates from 1397, when it was built by the third shogun (military commander) of the Ashikaga Shogunate. The reflection of the pavilion on the water of the adjacent pond produces an iconic view.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll step back into Japan's feudal past during a visit to Nijo Castle (Nijō-jō), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nijo Castle was built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo Period, a shogunate dynasty that would rule Japan for the next two and a half centuries. Being so close to the might of the Emperor in the nearby Imperial Palace, Ieyasu didn't rely on just walls and moats to fortify his castle. As insurance against treachery, he had "nightingale floors" installed, floorboards that would creak when walked upon by intruders, along with concealed alcoves where his bodyguards could keep watch. The 400-year-old buildings and gorgeous gardens of Nijo Castle offer a rare glimpse into the early Edo period.

Dinner: On your own—check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to make your own discoveries. One activity that may interest you is heading to Gion, the famous entertainment district and geisha quarter. A great way to experience this area is to stroll through the 17th-century-style streets in the early evening, taking notice of the traditional tea houses and lantern decoration.

Day 12 Kyoto • Nara • Matcha tea experience

- Destination: Kyoto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Vista Premio Kyoto Nagomitei or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll join our Trip Experience Leader on a visit to Nara, which was the capital of Japan before Kyoto and Tokyo. While here, we will visit Todaiji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As we approach Todaiji Temple's Daibutsu-den Hall, you will perhaps first notice its massive size, as it is the largest wooden building in the world. It is also one of the major historic temples in Japan and contains valuable artifacts. Here, we'll admire the Daibutsu—an impressive 52-foot Buddha statue. As we continue to explore Todaiji, we'll likely notice another unique feature of its park area: its tame, free-roaming deer, which were traditionally regarded as the messengers of the Shinto god Kasuga. If you want a close-up introduction to them, you can purchase *shika senbei* (special biscuits) to feed them, but be prepared to be very popular with these lovely creatures when you offer them food.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Nara.

Afternoon: Afterwards, we will drive to Uji Fukujuen and visit a local tea company, where we'll learn about Japanese tea culture. The

staff will demonstrate the intricate process of making green tea, showing us how to prepare the matcha for ourselves using a whisk. While enjoying our matcha with a sweet, we'll be able to ask further questions about the history and cultural significance of matcha tea in Japan.

We will then drive back to Kyoto. The remainder of your day is free for your own exploration.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You're free to do as you wish.

Day 13 Kyoto • Visit Zen Temple

- Destination: Kyoto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Vista Premio Kyoto Nagomitei or similar

Activity Note: This day includes an uphill walk of 200 steps with a handrail to reach Senkoji Temple.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll drive to Togetsu Bridge and then make our way to Senkoji Temple. At this 400-year-old temple, we'll have a chance to practice Zen meditation with a monk.

Zen is a branch of Buddhist thought that is built around the idea that divine wisdom resides in each person; meditation techniques are used to reveal this inner divine nature. Typically meditation consists of simple sitting and breathing practices that are meant to calm the mind and allow the practitioner's focus to shift away from the mundane.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, you're free to enjoy the rest of the day on your own.

Dinner: On your own tonight—feel free to ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like.

Day 14 Kyoto • Visit Fushimi Inari Shrine • Meet a sushi chef

- Destination: Kyoto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Vista Premio Kyoto Nagomitei or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning we will visit Fushimi Inari Shrine, one of Japan's most iconic sites. Comprised of a winding path of 10,000 vermillion *torii* (gates), the shrine snakes its way up a heavily forested mountain.

After our explorations here, we'll take a local train to Kyoto Station. Here, we'll meet a talented sushi chef and learn about his or her life. Sushi is perhaps the most iconic Japanese dish, usually prepared with rice, seaweed, raw fish, and various vegetables. While we learn about this culinary art form, we'll have an opportunity to ask any questions we may have about the art of sushi-making, and take part in a hands-on experience.

Lunch: Our small group will sit down to dine on the sushi we helped to prepare.

Afternoon: Continue to enjoy the rest of afternoon on your own. Kyoto is home to a tremendous number of religious sites—nearly 400 Shinto shrines and 1,700 Buddhist temples—for you to discover. Or, for a look at some of the artwork these ancient religions have inspired, you can view Shinto and Buddhist art at the Hosomi Art Museum.

Dinner: We'll celebrate our Japan travel experiences during a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You're free to continue making your own discoveries. Perhaps you want to continue celebrating your adventure with your group or retire to your room to rest before traveling the following day.

Day 15 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: You will transfer to the airport in Osaka for your flight home.

If you're continuing on our optional post-trip extension to *Hiroshima: City of Peace*, you'll transfer by bullet train this morning, while travelers taking our optional *Osaka to Hiroshima by Bullet Train* post-trip extension will transfer to Osaka via private motorcoach.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Hiroshima: City of Peace*

Day 1 Bullet train to Hiroshima, Japan • Visit Peace Memorial Park

Day 2 Hiroshima • Optional *Islands of the Inland Sea* tour

Day 3 Hiroshima • Explore Miyajima

Day 4 Hiroshima • Return to U.S.

OR

6 nights in Osaka to Hiroshima by Bullet Train

Day 1 Overland to Osaka • Mozu Tombs • Visit Sakai Traditional Crafts Museum

Day 2 Awaji Island • Cross Akashi Kaikyo Bridge • Nojima Fault Memorial Museum • Visit sake brewery

Day 3 Visit Osaka Castle • Moat cruise

Day 4 Bullet train to Hiroshima • Visit Peace Memorial Park

Day 5 Hiroshima • Optional *Islands of the Inland Sea* tour

Day 6 Hiroshima • Explore Miyajima

Day 7 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Gokayama

(Day 9 \$165 per person)

On this optional tour, we'll discover the unique culture, lifestyle, and architecture of Gokayama, a mountain village—and UNESCO World Heritage Site—in the forested countryside outside of Kanazawa. First, we'll witness the distinctive architectural style known as *gassho-zukuri*, which is characterized by steeply pitched thatched roofs that are both striking and elegant, as we tour the traditional houses of Ainokura. Then, we'll learn the art of *mochitsuki*, or rice-cake making, followed by a visit to a workshop in Gokayama to see how *washi*—a thick, fibrous paper made from mulberry bark—is created. During our visit, we'll also learn more about the history and culture of Gokayama, enjoy a traditional dance performance, and savor a traditional lunch of *soba* (buckwheat noodles) at a local restaurant.

PRE-TRIP

Tokyo: Ancient & Modern Traditions

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 3 nights accommodation
- » 6 meals—3 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 1 dinner
- » 2 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

The capital of Japan only since the 19th century, Tokyo has blossomed into the world's largest metropolis, yet still maintains an astonishing blend of the ultra-modern with centuries-old temples and shrines. Kick off your travel in Japan by visiting serene gardens and seeing traditional homes of Tokyo's Yanaka district.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Afternoon/Evening: Depart the U.S. today on an overnight flight to Tokyo, Japan.

Day 2 Arrive in Tokyo, Japan

- Destination: Tokyo
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Afternoon/Evening: Arrive at the Tokyo airport in the late afternoon or early evening today. An O.A.T. representative will greet us at the airport and assist with your transfer to our hotel in Tokyo, where you'll meet travelers who arrived early before their pre-trip extension.

Day 3 Explore Tokyo • Visit Bonsai Garden • Tsukiji Outer Market visit

- Destination: Tokyo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll take part in a Welcome Briefing. Then we'll board a bus and set out for the Tsukiji Outer Market. Once a true wholesale market for professional chefs and restaurateurs, now you'll be able to encounter all types of traditional Japanese foods designed to be bought in smaller sizes for the average consumer. Visit one of the many kitchenware shops, try dried bonito flakes, and take in the energy of the market.

Lunch: At a street restaurant right in the market, featuring traditional cuisine.

Afternoon: After the bustle of the market, we'll set off for a Bonsai Garden, where we'll meet a bonsai master, see the impressive collection of perfectly manicured trees, and learn about the delicate art of rowing and pruning bonsai. Afterwards, you'll have some time to explore Tokyo on your own.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: This evening is free to explore Tokyo on your own. You may take in the city's pulsating nightlife, or retire early to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 4 Tokyo • Explore Yanaka district • Visit Ueno Park

- Destination: Tokyo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Shizutetsu Hotel Prezio Tokyo Tamachi or similar

Activity Note: Today's activities include walking for a total distance of approximately 5.5 miles. Also, please be aware that the Tokyo National Museum is closed on Mondays. If this day falls on a Monday, the Tokyo National Museum will be replaced with another local museum.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll set out to explore Tokyo. A short ride by the local subway will take us to Yanaka. Almost miraculously, this district was spared the Allied fire bombings during World War II—and also somehow survived the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. As a result, Yanaka remains one of the atmospheric areas of Tokyo, with its series of winding lanes, artisan shops, old temples, and traditional restaurants.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Yanaka.

Afternoon: We'll next discover the neighboring district of Ueno, another one of the few remaining places in Tokyo to experience what the city was like in the old days. The collection of museums and galleries found here is said to be the best in all of Japan. We'll take a stroll through Ueno Park, one of the city's largest open spaces and renowned for its seasonal cherry blossoms. We then stop at the Tokyo National Museum, which is home to some 87,000 artifacts. The world's largest collection of Japanese art, including some of the most important Buddhist artwork, is housed here along with many other treasures.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like.

Day 5 Tokyo • Optional Kamakura tour • Begin main trip

- Destination: Tokyo
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity Note: Today's optional tour may be particularly strenuous as it includes seven miles of walking and the use of public transportation. Comfortable footwear is highly recommended. The optional tour also must be reserved at least 25 days prior to departure, and requires a minimum of two participants in order to operate.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a full day to explore Tokyo independently. Tokyo is famous for its shopping, and has several large department stores that contain just about everything produced in Japan, from food to items such as cameras, computers, and traditional Japanese crafts. If you are interested in designer fashions, be sure to stop by the Ginza district and browse the many upscale stores there.

Or, you can join us for an optional full-day walking tour of Kamakura. After a train ride, we'll start our tour of this ancient city, surrounded by mountains on three sides and the sea on the other. Kamakura was the seat of the first Shogunate, or military government, in Japan during the Kamakura Era (1192-1333), and is replete with numerous historical shrines and temples, including the Daibutsu, the bronze image of Buddha, and the Hase Kannon Temple, famous for its statue of Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy.

Lunch: Travelers who choose to spend the day making independent explorations will enjoy lunch on their own today. Travelers who join our optional tour will have lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Travelers who choose to spend the day on their own can continue exploring independently. Travelers on our optional tour will visit the eleventh-century Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine this afternoon. The rest of our traveling companions arrive today to begin our *Japan's Cultural Treasures* adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Kamakura

(Day 5 \$170 per person)

Explore the ancient city of Kamakura, surrounded by mountains on three sides and the sea on the other. Kamakura was once the seat of the first shogunate in Japan during the Kamakura Era (1192-1333), and is replete with numerous historical shrines and temples. We'll first visit Daibutsu, the bronze image of Buddha, then continue on to Hase Kannon Temple, famous for its statue of Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy.

After lunch in a local restaurant, we'll cap off our tour at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine, which contains many national treasures and important cultural artifacts.

Please note: *This optional tour must be reserved at least 25 days prior to departure, and requires a minimum of two participants in order to operate. For details, call your Adventure Specialist.*

POST-TRIP

Hiroshima: City of Peace

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Bullet train transfers from Kyoto to Hiroshima
- » 3 nights accommodation
- » 6 meals—3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 2 dinners
- » 3 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers (by public transportation)

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Built on an island chain in the Ota River Delta, Hiroshima will always be remembered for the events of August 6, 1945. But in the years since, the city has rebuilt, grown, and created the Peace Memorial Park.

Day 1 Bullet train to Hiroshima, Japan • Visit Peace Memorial Park

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Morning: As our main journey ends, we depart Kyoto and board a bullet train to Hiroshima. Upon arrival in Hiroshima, we'll check in to our hotel.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hiroshima.

Afternoon: We'll begin our discoveries with a tour of historic Hiroshima, rebuilt after the devastation of August 6, 1945, and now a thriving, healthy city. As we tour Peace Memorial Park, near the very center of the area of the A-bomb blast, you will see memorials commemorating the victims of that fearful day and the ruins of a building that was less than 600 feet from the detonation. The famous Atomic Bomb Dome (Genbaku Dome) was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in

1996. The Peace Memorial Museum displays remnants of the bombing day and accounts of survivors, but in this park you will also see manifestations of the hope for world peace. At the Children's Peace Memorial, people from all over the world have placed folded paper cranes as offerings for harmony on our planet. Then, we'll have the special opportunity to meet with an atomic bomb survivor or storyteller to hear a firsthand account of this horrific event.

Next, we'll take a brief orientation walk around the neighborhood with our Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: After dinner, your evening is free to explore Hiroshima on your own, enjoy a drink at the hotel's lounge, or return to your room to prepare for the next day's discoveries.

Day 2 Hiroshima • Optional *Islands of the Inland Sea* tour

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is free to explore Hiroshima independently. Or, you may join a full-day optional tour to the islands of the Inland Sea. The islands of the Inland Sea—the body of water separating the main Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—are cherished by the Japanese because of their beauty and the traditions they have maintained. And we enjoy a closer look at these islands today, delighting in views from the bridges that have only recently (since the 1980s) linked them to the mainland as we drive to Omishima Island, where we'll visit Tatara Shimanami Park and enjoy a view of the Inland Sea.

Lunch: Lunch is on your own for travelers not taking the optional tour. Travelers taking the optional tour will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant on Ikuchijima Island.

Afternoon: For travelers who did not join the optional tour, you can continue exploring Hiroshima on your own, visiting sites that have particular interest for you, or learning more about the city. You can walk through the Hiroshima Castle on the Ota River Delta, spend time in the Hiroshima Museum of Art, or simply relax at the Hiroshima Botanical Garden or Shukkeien Garden.

For travelers taking the optional tour, after lunch we'll visit the Ikuo Hirayama Museum of Art, which displays many works by world-famous Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama, who was born and spent his boyhood on this island. Having experienced the tragedy of the A-bomb at Hiroshima, Hirayama created many works on the theme of peace.

After that, if weather permits, we'll continue on to the Kosanji Temple, built by the Buddhist priest Kozo Kosanji in honor of his mother. This structure took 30 years to complete and boasts architectural characteristics of many culturally significant shrines and temples throughout the country.

Later, we'll depart for Mihara by hydrofoil, and then take a return train back to Hiroshima.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can offer suggestions for restaurant options in the area.

Evening: Free to explore on your own.

Day 3 Hiroshima • Explore Miyajima

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning we'll take a train and a short ferry ride to Miyajima, an island that was once worshipped for its spirituality. Here, Mount Misen—whose primeval forests are home to wild monkeys and deer—climbs to more than 1,700 feet and overlooks the Seto Inland Sea. We'll take a walking tour here with our Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will offer suggestions on nearby dining options.

Afternoon: After lunch, we take the ferry and train back to Hiroshima. The rest of the afternoon is yours to make your own discoveries.

Dinner: This evening, we'll toast to our Hiroshima discoveries during a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Your last night in Hiroshima is free to explore on your own, or pack for tomorrow's return flight home.

Day 4 Hiroshima • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport in Hiroshima for your flight home. Cross the International Date Line during flight, arriving back in the U.S. on the same day.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Islands of the Inland Sea

(Day 2 \$170 per person)

The islands of the Inland Sea—the body of water separating the main Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—are cherished by the Japanese for their beauty. After breakfast, we'll travel by bullet train and ferry to Omishima Island, where we'll visit Tatara Shimanami Park and enjoy a magnificent view of the Inland Sea. Then, we continue to Ikuchijima Island. Here we'll have lunch followed by a visit to the Ikuo Hirayama Museum of Art, which displays many works by world-famous Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama, who was born and spent his boyhood on this island. Having experienced the tragedy of the A-bomb at Hiroshima, Hirayama created many works on the theme of peace.

After that, if weather permits, we'll continue on to the Kosanji Temple, built by the Buddhist priest Kozo Kosanji to honor his mother. This structure took thirty years to complete and boasts architecture characteristic of many culturally significant shrines and temples throughout the country. Later, we depart for Mihara by speedboat, and then take a return train to Hiroshima. We'll arrive back at our hotel in the early evening.

POST-TRIP

Osaka to Hiroshima by Bullet Train

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Bullet train transfer from Osaka to Hiroshima
- » 6 nights accommodation
- » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 4 dinners
- » 8 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers (by public transportation)

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Day 1 Overland to Osaka • Mozu Tombs • Visit Sakai Traditional Crafts Museum

- Destination: Osaka
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Osaka

Morning: We'll depart for Osaka this morning via private motorcoach, stopping along the way in Sakai to witness the Mozu Tombs, ancient Japanese burial mounds designated a Cultural World Heritage Site in 2019. Built between the fourth and six centuries, this cluster of tombs was created for Japan's ancient ruling class—the larger the mound, the higher the class entombed within. The largest of these mounds, reserved for emperors such as Emperor Nintoku Kofun, are keyhole shaped and surrounded by moats. This site is best viewed from above, to appreciate its scope, which we will do at the Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center alongside a local guide.

Lunch: On your own in the Sakai City Hall area. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Afternoon: After lunch we'll visit the Sakai Traditional Crafts Museum. Known today for its production of high-quality knives, Sakai can trace its blacksmithing heritage back to the fourth century when the Mozu Tombs were first constructed. Here, we'll learn about this fascinating history, and how many of Japan's modern-day blacksmithing techniques were developed here.

Afterwards, we'll head to our hotel to check in.

Dinner: We'll go to Osaka's Shinsaibashi district tonight for dinner. Known as the "Nation's Kitchen," this neighborhood is famous for its lively street food culture. With our Trip Experience Leader by our side, we'll visit an array of food stalls, interacting with the shop owners as well as other locals out for a bite this evening.

Evening: Free to continue exploring Shinsaibashi on your own before we return to the hotel for the night.

Day 2 Awaji Island • Cross Akashi Kaikyo Bridge • Nojima Fault Memorial Museum • Visit sake brewery

- Destination: Osaka
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Osaka

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll embark on a day of discoveries on Awaji Island, located in the Seto Inland Sea. To get there, we must first cross Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the world at just over two miles long. It was completed in 1998 after around a decade of construction, and today is known as the symbol of Awaji Island. At night, the bridge is illuminated with lights that change colors with the season and time of the evening.

Next, we'll head to the Nojima Fault Memorial Museum, located at the epicenter of the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. Also known as the Kobe Earthquake, this devastating natural disaster claimed the lives of over 6,000 people and destroyed more than 400,000 buildings. The museum captures this widespread destruction with video, displays, and a long hall that features a preserved section of the Nojima Fault still exposed.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll visit a local sake brewery. The Sennen-ichi brewery has been in operation for more than 140 years and produces a variety of sakes using traditional methods. We'll learn about the brewing process and enjoy a tasting as well.

We'll drive back to the mainland later this afternoon and arrive at our hotel right around dinnertime.

Dinner: On your own in Osaka. The city is home to one of the largest fish markets in the country, so you may wish to seek out some of Osaka's remarkably fresh sushi and sashimi.

Evening: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Visit Osaka Castle • Moat cruise

- Destination: Osaka
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Osaka

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll visit Osaka Castle, one of Japan's most famous historical sites. Built in 1583 by samurai general turned daimyo, or feudal lord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the castle was meant to become the center of a new, unified Japan under his rule. Today, the castle is open to the public (despite its imposing citadels, stone walls, and surrounding moat) as well as the expansive Osaka Castle Park—one of the country's most popular spots during cherry blossom season.

We'll then get a difference perspective of the castle during a boat cruise along its moat.

Lunch: On your own near Osaka Castle—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Afternoon: After lunch, the remainder of the afternoon is on your own. As your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Dinner: At a local restaurant in Osaka.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free to spend as you wish.

Day 4 Bullet train to Hiroshima • Visit Peace Memorial Park

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel in Osaka this morning and board a bullet train, or *shinkansen*, for our ride to Hiroshima.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Hiroshima.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll embark on a tour of Peace Memorial Park, near the very center of the area of the A-bomb blast. Here, you will see memorials commemorating the victims of that fearful day and the ruins of a building that was less than 600 feet from the detonation. The famous Atomic Bomb Dome (Genbaku Dome) was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. The Peace Memorial Museum displays artifacts of the bombing day and accounts of survivors, but in this park you will also see manifestations of the hope for world peace. At the Children's Peace Memorial, people from all over the world have placed folded paper cranes as offerings for harmony on our planet. Then, we'll have the special opportunity to meet with an atomic bomb survivor or storyteller to hear a firsthand account of this horrific event.

Afterwards, we'll drive to our hotel and check in to our rooms. Then, we'll take a brief orientation walk around the neighborhood with our Trip Experience Leader before departing for dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Your evening is free to explore Hiroshima on your own, enjoy a drink at the hotel's lounge, or return to your room to prepare for the next day's discoveries.

Day 5 Hiroshima • Optional *Islands of the Inland Sea* tour

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is free to explore Hiroshima independently. Or, you may join a full-day optional excursion to the islands of the Inland Sea. We'll depart our hotel after breakfast for a train journey to the islands and returns just before dinner.

The islands of the Inland Sea—the body of water separating the main Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—are cherished by the Japanese because of their beauty and the traditions they have maintained. And we enjoy a closer look at these islands today, delighting in views from the bridges that have only recently (since the 1980s) linked them to the mainland as we drive to Omishima Island, where we'll visit Tatara Shimanami Park and enjoy a view of the Inland Sea.

Lunch: Lunch is on your own for travelers not taking the optional tour. At a local restaurant on Ikuchijima Island for travelers taking the optional tour.

Afternoon: For travelers who did not join the optional tour, you can continue exploring Hiroshima on your own, visiting sites that have particular interest for you, or learning more about the city. You can walk through the Hiroshima Castle on the Ota River Delta, spend time in the Hiroshima Museum of Art, or simply relax at the Hiroshima Botanical Garden or Shukkeien Garden.

For travelers taking the optional tour, after lunch we'll visit the Ikuo Hirayama Museum of Art, which displays many works by world-famous Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama,

who was born and spent his boyhood on this island. Having experienced the tragedy of the A-bomb at Hiroshima, Hirayama created many works on the theme of peace. After that, if weather permits, we'll continue on to the Kosanji Temple, built by the Buddhist priest Kozo Kosanji in honor of his mother. This structure took 30 years to complete and boasts architectural characteristics of many culturally significant shrines and temples throughout the country.

Later, we'll depart for Mihara by hydrofoil, and then take a return train to Hiroshima.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can offer suggestions for restaurant options in the area.

Evening: Your evening is free to explore Hiroshima on your own, take advantage of the hotel's facilities, or relax in your room to prepare for tomorrow's activities.

Day 6 Hiroshima • Explore Miyajima

- Destination: Hiroshima
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Oriental Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we'll take a short train journey to the Miyajima ferry station, where we will then take a short ferry ride to Miyajima,

an island that was once worshipped for its spirituality. Here, Mount Misen—whose primeval forests are home to wild monkeys and deer—climbs to more than 1,700 feet and overlooks the Seto Inland Sea.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will offer suggestions on nearby dining options.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll take the ferry and train back to Hiroshima, arriving to our hotel mid-afternoon. The rest of the afternoon is yours to make your own discoveries.

Dinner: This evening, we'll toast to our Hiroshima discoveries during a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Your last night in Hiroshima is free to explore on your own, or pack for tomorrow's return flight home.

Day 7 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport in Hiroshima for your flight home this afternoon. Cross the International Date Line during flight, arriving back in the U.S. on the same day.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Islands of the Inland Sea

(Day 5 \$170 per person)

The islands of the Inland Sea—the body of water separating the main Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—are cherished by the Japanese for their beauty. After breakfast, we'll travel by bullet train

and ferry to Omishima Island, where we'll visit Tatara Shimanami Park and enjoy a magnificent view of the Inland Sea. Then, we continue to Ikuchijima Island. Here we'll have lunch followed by a visit to the Ikuo Hirayama Museum of Art, which displays many works by world-famous Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama,

who was born and spent his boyhood on this island. Having experienced the tragedy of the A-bomb at Hiroshima, Hirayama created many works on the theme of peace.

After that, if weather permits, we'll continue on to the Kosanji Temple, built by the Buddhist priest Kozo Kosanji to honor his mother. This structure took thirty years to complete and boasts architecture characteristic of many culturally significant shrines and temples throughout the country. Later, we depart for Mihara by speedboat, and then take a return train to Hiroshima. We'll arrive back at our hotel in the early evening.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Tokyo:** No additional pages are needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Hiroshima:** No additional pages are needed.
- **Stopover in Bangkok or Singapore:** You will need to add 2 additional pages to the applicable total listed above.
- **Stopover in Denpasar, Hong Kong, Seoul, or Taipei:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

Visas Required

We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 90 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. *This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.*

- **Japan: No visa required.**

- **South Korea (optional stopover only): An Electronic Travel Authorization is required.**
Note that this is a digital process only and you must apply online or via an app (we will send instructions). You will not receive a visa sticker for this ETA in your passport.
- **Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, or Taiwan (optional stopovers only): No visas required.** A visa is not required for U.S. citizens for stays of up to 90 days.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 4 locations in 14 days with 3 train rides and one overland drive of 4.5 hours

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk up to 5 miles unassisted each day and walk up and down stairs (sometimes as many as 60 at a time)
- Day 13 includes an uphill walk with 200 steps to reach Senkoji Temple
- Luggage porters are unavailable at hotels and on trains—you must be able to carry your own bags
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures are typically between 50–60°F in early spring, 85–100°F in summer, and 50–70°F in fall

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Walk over city streets, through gardens and markets, and within temples and shrines in which the ground may be uneven and stairways may lack handrails
- Travel by 24-passenger air-conditioned minibus (no toilet on board), *shinkansen* (bullet train), subway, local train, and 250-passenger boat
- Public transportation is used on the trip extensions in Tokyo and Hiroshima, often at subway stations with no escalators or elevators

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms, particularly in Tokyo, are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer simple amenities. Single rooms are especially small (161–193 sq. ft.), and often do not include closets.
- All accommodations feature private baths with hot water and Western-style toilet facilities
- Some hotels and restaurants in Japan still have designated areas for smoking. While O.A.T. strives to provide our travelers with non-smoking hotel rooms and local restaurants, please note that you may encounter cigarette smoke odor during your visit to Japan

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Bringing Medications to Japan

At time of writing, the U.S. Embassy in Japan had instructions about bringing medications into Japan on their website, <http://jp.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/importing-medications>. We encourage you to read the entire post online, but here are the key points:

- You can generally bring up to one month’s supply of prescription medicine into Japan, and up to two months’ supply of over-the-counter medications
- Some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States are illegal in Japan, including inhalers, plus some allergy and sinus medications. Specifically, products that contain stimulants (medicines that contain pseudoephedrine, such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers) or codeine are prohibited.
- For prescription medications, you must bring a copy of your doctor’s prescription as well as a letter stating the purpose of the drug. However, some U.S. prescription medications (such as Adderall) cannot be brought into Japan, even with a copy of the prescription. *Note: You may not be asked for a copy of your prescription, but if it is requested you must be able to provide one. Failure to provide a copy of prescriptions upon request could result in detainment.*
- For more information on whether or not you will be allowed to bring the particular medication into Japan, you could consult the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare website at www.mhlw.go.jp/english/index.html. *NOTE: We only recommend that you take this step if the medication is vital to you. If you don’t care that the medication might be confiscated, then it is not worth the effort.*

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.

- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in Japan is safe to drink. If you prefer bottled water, that is readily available.

Food

- In general, food safety standards in Japan are very high. Use the same basic precautions that you would at home and you should be fine.
- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for meals you take on your own.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Bring a mixture of different payment methods**—some cash and a couple of different cards—so that you'll be prepared for any situation.
- **Be prepared to try more than one ATM.** Occasionally local ATMs will not work with certain cards. For example, there was temporary stop on MasterCard at 7-Eleven ATMs in Japan a few years ago. So you may need to try more than one machine or try a different card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Japan: Japanese Yen (¥)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets.

During the trip, the easiest way to get local currency is to use a local ATM (your bank at home will convert and charge you in U.S. dollars). You can also exchange cash at some hotels and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). Never exchange money on the street.

All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

Throughout the trip, your Trip Experience Leader can advise you of ATM availability and warn you before you enter areas where there are no ATMs, but will not be able to guarantee which ATM will take your card.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Japan: ATMs are common, but not every ATM will take a U.S. card. Your best bet is to try a Post Office ATM or Seven Bank ATM (usually found inside 7-Eleven convenience stores). Both Post Office and Seven Bank ATM will display stickers that indicate what cards they accept. However, please note that using a credit card in an ATM for a cash advance may or may not work—even if the ATM has credit card logos.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Japan: Credit cards can be used at department stores, hotels, and businesses that cater to tourists, but most other shops and restaurants will want cash.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8–\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader

is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Housekeepers:** Tipping at hotels is not commonplace in Japan, and some hotels have trained their staff to decline tips. If you really want to reward exceptional service, ask your Trip Experience Leader for advice.
- **Waiters and Taxis:** Tipping is not customary or expected in Japan.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: Although our tipping figures are quoted in U.S. dollars for the sake of convenience, tips in local currency are strongly preferred in Japan. Please do not use personal or traveler's check for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

If you are taking the optional post-trip extension to Hiroshima and have made your own air arrangements, your return airport transfer to the Hiroshima Airport (HIJ) will be included if you are departing the same day as the group. You will need to arrange your own transportation if you are staying on your own after the conclusion of the post-trip.

The process for airport transfers is different on this adventure. If you have air with O.A.T. or purchased an air transfer for your arrival, your transportation will be as follows:

- An O.A.T. representative will meet you after you land at Tokyo's Narita Airport and direct you to your Jumbo Taxi (similar to a minivan). Note that you may need to wait at the airport until other travelers have arrived before the Jumbo Taxi will leave.
- You'll take the Jumbo Taxi straight to your hotel. Because of heavy traffic in Tokyo, the total transfer time may be 80–120 minutes.
- Your O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader will meet you in the hotel lobby when you arrive.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Optional Tours: Reserve Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you reserve the following optional tours in advance. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to do so is 45 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, space will be available for booking onsite, but this not guaranteed. Optional tours with O.A.T. can only be purchased with a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or a debit card with credit card functionality. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

Kamakura

Explore the ancient city of Kamakura, surrounded by mountains on three sides and the sea on the other. Kamakura was once the seat of the first shogunate in Japan during the Kamakura Era (1192–1333), and is replete with numerous historical shrines and temples. We'll first visit Daibutsu, the bronze image of Buddha, then continue on to Hase Kannon Temple, famous for its statue of Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy.

After lunch in a local restaurant, we'll cap off our tour at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine, which contains many national treasures and important cultural artifacts.

Please note: *This optional tour must be reserved at least 25 days prior to departure, and requires a minimum of two participants in order to operate. For details, call your Adventure Specialist.*

This optional tour is offered during the *Tokyo: Ancient & Modern Traditions* trip extension. The cost is \$170 per person.

Communicating with Home from Abroad

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Internet access is readily available in most places in Japan.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Japan: +81

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons.
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. A model with wheels is strongly recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p>A small bag is a necessity for certain portions of your trip. You'll need it for those times when luggage storage is so limited that we must send some luggage ahead. This smaller bag can be a duffel, a backpack, a weekend bag—whatever you feel comfortable with. It only needs to hold enough gear for two nights at most. For more details, see the “Your Luggage” section.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy-duty lockable zipper.
- **Carry-on bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during driving excursions and walking trips.
- **A small bag is a necessity for certain portions of your trip.** There will be two occasions on the main trip when your main luggage (your suitcase or large duffel bag) will be sent ahead because of the limited luggage space on the trains to and from Kanazawa. During these times you won't have access to your main luggage, so you'll need to use a smaller bag instead. This smaller bag can be a duffel, a backpack, or a weekend bag—whatever you feel comfortable with. It only needs to hold enough gear for two nights at most. Many travelers will simply re-purpose the bag they used as a carry-on during their flight. Or you could pack the smaller bag into your suitcase or big duffel. Travelers on the Hiroshima extension will also use this smaller bag during that extension.
- **TIP:** *For both your main luggage and smaller bag, you might want to consider a model with wheels. While OAT will provide for porter services when available, in Japan more often than not this service is not offered. There is no porter service at the airport and train stations, and most of the hotels do not offer porter service either. For that reason we suggest you bring only the amount of baggage that you feel comfortable handling yourself and we strongly suggest luggage with built-in wheels.*
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, **we suggest several layers of clothing.**
- **Laundromats are not readily available outside of residential areas.** Some of the hotels you visit may have laundry services. However, it is recommended that you pack as if you will be hand washing all your items. Look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. We recommend you wear sturdy walking shoes or similar supportive sports shoes that offer good traction. You may want to consider taking shoes that don't have laces, as you will be asked to take your shoes off in a number of the places, such as at shrines and castles and during the home-hosted visit. In the winter it can be very cold, even indoors to walk on these floors. We suggest you bring some thick, insulated socks.

Style Hints

Dress on our trip is functional and casual. Wearing shorts is acceptable in most situations for both men and women. There is no strict dress code, but when visiting temples or shrines local people would appreciate it if you dressed neatly and modestly.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the "Climate" chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans for comfort and ease of movement.
- ☐ Walking shorts: Cut long for modesty
- ☐ For women—1 or 2 travel skirts: Our female Trip Experience Leaders suggest that a skirt is especially convenient when using Asian-style squat toilets.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking or running shoes. Shoes that can be slipped on, or lace-free shoes are recommended because you will need to remove your shoes often in temples and holy sites. Because it is very common to remove shoes at temples, you may wish to bring extra "temple socks". If traveling in the winter we suggest you bring thick, insulated socks as some temples are not heated and the floor will be cold.
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater as motorcoach air conditioning can be cold

- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lens; sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent with DEET (30%–35% strength)
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking chapstick
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (not individual packets) and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters: see “A Word About Electricity” for details.
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

IMPORTANT TIP: At time of writing, the State Department had detailed instructions about bringing medications of any kind—prescription or over-the-counter—into Japan. We encourage you to check their website at <http://travel.state.gov>. For more details, search “Medications and Japan”.

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication, for rare emergency purposes

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

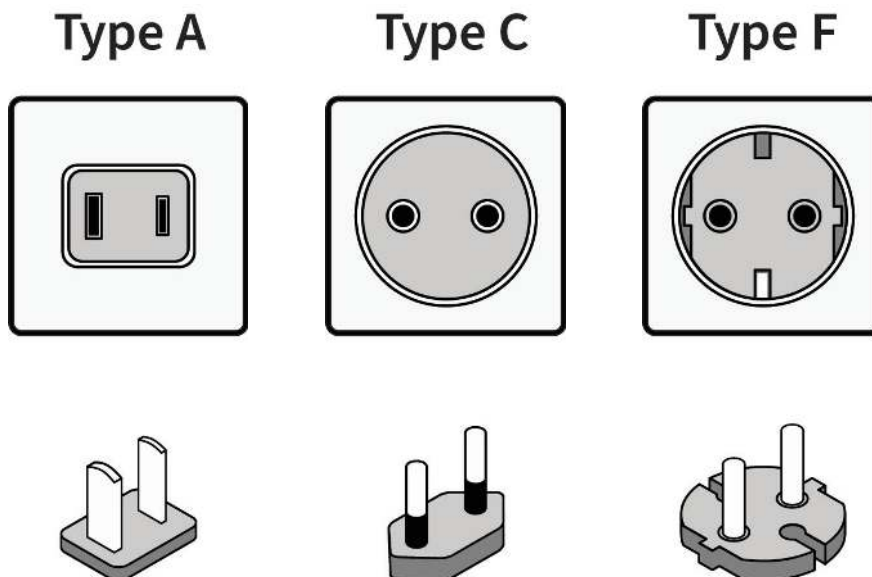
Electricity in Japan is 100 volts. The types of things a traveler will want to plug in can run off both 100 and 110, but they might be a little slower or may take a little longer to charge in Japan.

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. By far the most common plug type in Japan is Type A, which is the same as a standard U.S. plug. Because electric plugs in Japan are American-style, you will not need an adapter for the main trip or extensions.

Japan: A (same as the U.S.)



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Japan: Most of Japan lies in a temperate zone with weather conditions similar to the east coast of the United States. The four distinct seasons play a significant role in Japanese culture, with festivals, religious sites, dress, and even table settings all linked to the changing of seasons. Spring can be very unpredictable and temperatures often fluctuate, and the plum and cherry blossoms touch the entire landscape with splashes of whites and pinks. June and July bring the summer rains, which can be quite heavy at times, along with temperatures in the 80s and some humidity. Weather during September can be briefly turbulent, with some fast-moving thunderstorms inland and occasional typhoons over the ocean. The rest of autumn is spectacular, with slightly cool days, clear blue skies, and stunning foliage. Winter days are chilly but temperatures don't often drop below freezing. Snow falls most abundantly in the northern part of the country and along the coast of the Sea of Japan, making skiing a favorite means of enjoying the winter landscape. Please bring with warm clothing.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	TOKYO, JAPAN			KANAZAWA, JAPAN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	48 to 35	61 to 46	2.0	42 to 34	80 to 71	11.3
FEB	49 to 36	63 to 49	2.8	43 to 33	79 to 68	7.6
MAR	54 to 41	69 to 55	4.2	50 to 37	77 to 60	6.5
APR	64 to 50	76 to 60	5.1	62 to 47	75 to 56	6.2
MAY	72 to 58	79 to 61	5.7	70 to 55	77 to 57	5.6
JUN	76 to 66	87 to 71	6.9	77 to 64	83 to 65	7.2
JUL	82 to 71	89 to 72	5.3	83 to 72	84 to 68	8.8
AUG	86 to 75	87 to 68	5.8	87 to 74	82 to 64	6.4
SEP	79 to 69	85 to 69	8.5	79 to 66	84 to 64	9.5
OCT	69 to 58	78 to 64	7.6	68 to 55	82 to 61	8.2
NOV	61 to 49	72 to 58	3.8	58 to 46	79 to 63	10.1
DEC	53 to 40	65 to 50	2.1	49 to 38	78 to 67	13.3

MONTH	KYOTO, JAPAN			HIROSHIMA, JAPAN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	46 to 30	70	2.2	47 to 35	78 to 53	1.9
FEB	48 to 32	65	2.6	48 to 35	79 to 54	2.6
MAR	53 to 33	60	4.3	54 to 40	79 to 55	4.2
APR	66 to 44	60	5.9	64 to 49	78 to 55	6.5
MAY	73 to 51	65	5.7	71 to 57	81 to 58	6.1
JUN	80 to 60	70	9.2	77 to 66	86 to 68	10.0
JUL	87 to 69	70	8.0	84 to 74	88 to 70	9.1
AUG	89 to 71	70	5.8	87 to 75	85 to 65	4.3
SEP	82 to 64	70	7.9	80 to 68	85 to 65	7.5
OCT	71 to 51	70	5.0	71 to 57	82 to 57	4.2
NOV	60 to 41	70	3.2	61 to 47	82 to 55	2.6
DEC	51 to 32	70	2.1	52 to 39	80 to 54	1.8

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Japanese Culture

To many Westerners, Japanese culture is mystifying. Perhaps because of the contradictory nature of Japanese society itself—one that is both rooted in traditions that date back thousands of years and in a rapid state of flux, laser focused on the latest technological developments, shifting fads, and fashion trends. All true, which makes Japan such a fascinating region of the world to explore.

As guests in any foreign land, having an awareness of local manners and customs—and following them—not only shows respect but bridges the cultural divide and enriches your travel experience. There are subtleties to Japanese culture and complex rules of etiquette that foreign guests are not expected to know—and perhaps we could never know them. But there are a few simple things to keep in mind about Japan if you'd like to avoid a cultural faux pas.

An obvious social convention in Japan is bowing. Everyone seems to bow at every occasion—hello, goodbye, sorry, thank you, and hundreds more. There are even different degrees of bowing (a 30-degree bow means this, a 45-degree bow means that). And when someone bows as a sign of respect—like the staff as you enter a store, a return bow is not expected. It's all very complicated, but when you meet someone in Japan, a little bow from you is always nice. And it is customary to remove your footwear when entering a Japanese home, temple, traditional guesthouse (*ryokan*), and sometimes even restaurants. When in doubt, just look around. If you see a pile of shoes, you should probably remove yours.

It's also considered rude to walk down the street while snacking. That's why when you see people milling around at vending machines—they're eating or drinking whatever they just purchased before they leave. And when you're in a restaurant, try to remember not to put your chopsticks into your bowl of rice or to use them to pass food to someone else—it's considered bad manners, and also reminds the Japanese of a ceremony performed at a funeral. And if you're having drinks with a few people, it's polite to refill someone else's glass rather than your own. If you don't want another drink, just leave your glass full. And strange as it seems for a nation that follows such strict rules of etiquette, slurping noodles or soups is not just acceptable, it's encouraged!

Religion in Japan

Religion in Japan is a belief system rooted in the ideas of Shintoism and Buddhism and intertwined with everyday life and culture. Shintoism is Japan's indigenous belief system which is concerned with the spirituality of all things in nature. Buddhism arrived in Japan from China and other Asian countries in the sixth century. The two systems are able to coexist in Japan since the focus of Shintoism is on the spirituality of the living world—or life—and Buddhism is more focused on the soul, or the afterlife. In general, the shrines you see in Japan are Shinto, and the temples are Buddhist.

Early in the 20th century, religious beliefs in Japan centered around their Emperor as a living god—with the entire nation united as one big family. But after the crushing defeat of World War II, Japanese society became increasingly secularized. Today, Japanese religious beliefs are more personal, centering around their own family. While religious rituals accompany births, marriages, deaths, and certain festivals, most Japanese do not worship regularly or even consider themselves particularly religious. And as a nation, Japan is very tolerant of other religions—up to 10% of Japan's people practice Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, or new religious movements like *shin shukyo*.

Dietary Restrictions

Our meals will be based on the local cuisine. Western foods will be available at breakfast and some lunches, but otherwise we will experience the foods of Japan—many of them containing ingredients that are new and different to us. Some special accommodations can be made for dietary restrictions or allergies, but this is not always guaranteed; if you have any allergies or special requests please let your Trip Experience Leader know. If you are sensitive to MSG, please keep in mind that this is a very common ingredient in Japan, and that it may not be possible to avoid it entirely.

Language Barrier

Given the many cultural links between Japan and the US, you might expect a large number of people to speak English as a second language. But actually, it is not that common, and the people that do have some English may be hesitant or shy about using it in front of native speakers. But you can have some great “conversations” with local people, even if you don't speak a word of Japanese. Indeed, non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling. Keep in mind, however, that it is always good form to know at least a few words in Japanese.

Visiting a Home

During your trip, you will visit to a local home for tea and a glimpse of daily Japanese life. Therefore we want to inform you that, in Japan it is customary—though not compulsory—for guests to bring a small gift from their home country to present to their hosts. It could be anything from wine to chocolate to something unique from your home state. The Japanese are fond of

American products, especially items they may never have seen before. It needn't be anything elaborate, just a small gesture for your new Japanese friends. Sharing your family photos also adds to this unique cultural interaction.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Japanese Cuisine

There are more than a dozen types of Japanese cuisine, each of which is distinctly different. Generally, only one type of cuisine is served in a given restaurant—for example raw seafood is served in a sushi bar, while tempura is featured at a tempura counter. There are, of course, some exceptions. Fancier restaurants tend to offer more choice. Below are brief descriptions of some of the main cuisines.

- **Kushiage:** Kushiage foods are breaded and deep-fried on skewers and include chicken, beef, seafood, and lots of seasonal vegetables (snow peas, green pepper, ginkgo nuts, lotus root, and the like). They're served with a specialty sauce and slice of lemon.

- **Okonomiyaki:** This cooking style originated in Osaka after World War II. It is a sort of Japanese pizza. A pancake is topped with meat or fish, shredded cabbage, vegetables, and Worcestershire sauce.
- **Robatayaki:** Robatayaki refers to restaurants in which seafood and vegetables are cooked over an open charcoal grill. All types of food ingredients are on the menu; the cooking distinction is that all foods are grilled.
- **Sashimi & Sushi:** Sashimi is simply raw seafood, usually eaten alone (without rice), and dipped into a mixture of wasabi and soy sauce. Sushi is raw fish with vinegared rice. It comes in many varieties, and is also served with wasabi and dipped in soy sauce.
- **Soba & Udon Noodles:** Soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour; udon noodles are a thick white wheat noodle. Both can be eaten plain, in soups, or in combination with other foods.
- **Shabu-Shabu & Sukiyaki:** The latter is among Japan's best-known beef dishes; it is often stir-fried at the table. Shabu-shabu is also prepared at your table and consists of thinly sliced beef cooked in a broth with vegetables in a kind of fondue.
- **Tempura:** This well-known Japanese food is fish and vegetables coated in a batter of egg, water, and wheat flour, and then deep-fried.
- **Teppanyaki:** A teppanyaki restaurant is a Japanese steakhouse. The chef cooks your steak and vegetables on a smooth hot grill right in front of you.

Please keep in mind that Japanese food typically features MSG, gluten, and fish broth. If you have a special meal request, we will do everything possible to assist but **special meal requests are not guaranteed in Japan** and there is a possibility of cross-contamination during food preparation. Due to these cultural differences, special meal requests may be very simple and limited in variety, such as meat, fish, and vegetables that are boiled or steamed without seasonings. You may consider bringing supplementary snacks or seasonings for your personal use.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Japan

Souvenirs are a Japanese staple and are sold everywhere, even near shrines. For example if you visit the temples in Arashiyama, keep an eye out for goods made from Japanese fabric. Also, each city we visit offers many places and shops where you can find nice souvenir items.

- **Department Stores:** Japanese department stores are famous the world over, and with good reason. They are like mini-cities and contain just about everything produced in Japan, from food courts to departments selling such items as cameras and computers. They also sell many traditional Japanese crafts. And the service is outstanding with attentive clerks and beautiful gift-wrapping.
- **Crafts:** The Japanese highly value traditional crafts and produce some wonderful goods. Japanese artisans are skilled at traditional crafts such as ceramics, lacquerware, and basket making, and produce world-famous fine knives and cutlery.
- **Regional Traditions:** These destinations are well known for their products: Mikimoto pearl in Toba; fabric, embroidery and incense in Kyoto. You will find Japanese paper products and Japanese pastry with elaborate work throughout Japan.
- **Antiques:** There are some excellent flea markets and open-air antique dealers in Tokyo and Kyoto.
- **Electronics:** Digital cameras, laser discs, CD players, calculators, and hand-held computers are ubiquitous in Japan with good bargains common. In Tokyo you'll want to visit Akihabara, a huge electrical appliance district with open-front shops selling every possible electronic gadget. Shoppers mob this district, so be prepared for crowds.
- **Porcelain, Pottery:** Japan is a big producer of high-quality pottery and porcelain items. All of the big department stores carry superb pottery such as the Satsuma Arima, Hagi, Bizen and Tobe pottery. Other famous ceramic companies are Kutani in Kanazawa and Kiyomizu in Kyoto.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping

or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Japan

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 145,913 square miles
- **Capital:** Tokyo
- **Languages:** Japanese is the official language of Japan.
- **Ethnicity:** Japanese 98.5%, Koreans 0.5%, Chinese 0.4%, other 0.6%
- **Location:** An archipelago extending in an arc more than 1,744 miles from northeast to southwest in the Pacific Ocean, Japan is separated from the east coast of Asia by the Sea of Japan.
- **Geography:** The Sea of Japan separates Japan from the east coast of Asia. Japan consists of four major islands: Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku. The Kurils to the northeast of the main islands are now occupied by Russia and subject to dispute. About 60% of Japan is mountain terrain, and the country is blessed with beautiful and varied landscape as well as lush greenery.
- **Population:** 125,620,000 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Observe both Shinto and Buddhist 84%, other 16% (including Christian 0.7%)
- **Time Zone:** Japan is on Japan Standard Time, 14 hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 8pm in Tokyo.

National Holidays: Japan

In addition to the holidays listed below, Japan celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a Gregorian calendar. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

02/11 National Foundation Day

02/23 Emperor's Birthday

04/29 Showa Day (usually the start of Golden Week)

05/03 Constitution Memorial Day

05/04 Greenery Day

05/05 Children's Day

3rd Monday in July Marine Day

8/11 Mountain Day

3rd Monday in September Respect for the Aged Day

2nd Monday in October Health and Sports Day

11/03 Culture Day

11/23 Labor Thanksgiving Day

Japan: A Brief History

Japan's recorded history begins in about AD 400 when the Yamato clan, a group who controlled much of the island's central and western lands, conquered its rivals and introduced the concept of an imperial court to Japan—something similar to China's court. About this same time, Buddhism was introduced to Japan by way of neighboring Korea. Up until the 16th century, Japan's history was dominated by tales of harsh warlords, each controlling his own small area, engaging in struggles with neighbors or intruders. Then, like many of its Asian neighbors, Japan underwent transformational changes when waves of foreigners arrived at its shores seeking trade and riches.

Foreign influences began in 1543, when Portuguese ships brought traders and missionaries to Japan. Not far behind, Spanish, Dutch, and English traders had the same thing in mind. Eventually, the Tokugawa, a family of warlords—or shoguns—had enough. Taking control over most of Japan in the early 17th century, they banned Christianity and sealed off Japan from all outsiders for the next 250 years—except for the Dutch, who were allowed to trade at the port of Nagasaki. Then, in 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry sailed an American fleet into Tokyo Bay, forcing the Japanese to open the country to trade. Japan quickly developed into a modern power with a large imperial army.

Throughout the latter part of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, Japan was often at war with its neighbors China and Russia over territorial claims. Firmly in the throes of a militaristic society, Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, then invaded China in 1936. And on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked American forces at Pearl Harbor, initiated a war with the United States. But by 1942, Japanese military successes in the Pacific were waning. Forced to retreat island by island back to their home island, the Japanese military finally surrendered after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet Union declared war on Japan in 1945.

After a post-World War II occupation under United States General Douglas MacArthur, Japan regained full sovereignty in 1952. By the 1970s, Japan developed into one of the world's great economic powers, dominating worldwide banking and industry, and having great success in the automotive business. Japan became the world's second-largest economy after the United States. Then, throughout the 1990s Japan was plagued by banking and industrial scandals and had a succession of governments, explaining why some have nicknamed this the "lost decade". Today, Japan's economy has recovered but not regained the full luster of past decades.

In March of 2011, Japan's northeast coast was hit by a large offshore earthquake, which in turn triggered a tsunami. Although powerful, the damage from the initial earthquake was minor compared to the damage caused by the tsunami, which reached heights of 133 feet and flooded inland as far as six miles. The northern prefectures of Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima were particularly hard-hit, which put the nuclear power plants Fukushima Daiichi and Fukushima Daini at risk. By deliberately venting some radioactive isotopes from the Daiichi plant, Japanese authorities averted a meltdown, but these actions continue to raise concerns about the impact to the region immediately surrounding the plant. Many citizens felt the government leadership had not handled the crisis well and criticized the rebuild effort as too slow. As a result, Prime Minister Naoto Kan stepped down in 2011; he was succeeded by Yoshihiko Noda, who in turn was defeated by Shinzo Abe.

Due to reasons of declining health, Emperor Akihito announced that he was ready to step down from the Chrysanthemum Throne; and his formal abdication in 2019 made him the first Japanese monarch to do so in more than 200 years. Also due to health issues, Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest serving prime minister, announced in August 2020 that he is stepping down.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Japan

A Geek in Japan by Hector Garcia (2019, Culture) If you want to be “in the know” about Japanese cool culture, this offers a breezy, light overview of pop culture trends in Japan such as *manga* (comic books), *anime* (animated films), and *harajuku* colorful street fashion).

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet by David Mitchell (2010, Historical Fiction) The year is 1799, and the handful of traders from the Dutch East India company who are allowed to work in Japan are confined to an island in Nagasaki Harbor—yet somehow quiet bookkeeper Jacob de Zoet meets and falls in love with a beautiful Japanese midwife.

Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption by Laura Hillenbrand (2010, Biography/History) In a true story so unlikely that it reads like fiction, *Unbroken* recounts the exploits of Louis Zamperini, a U.S. airman whose plane crashes in a remote Japanese-controlled waters of the Pacific. It’s an astonishing tale of survival about one of WWII’s many forgotten heroes.

Flags of Our Fathers by James Bradley (2006, History) Gain further insights into the clash between the East and West during the war years in this personal story of the six young American soldiers who raised the flag at Iwo Jima, as told by the son of one of the six. It’s filled with gripping tales of individual heroism in the battle over an island riddled with tunnels and 22,000 Japanese defenders who planned to fight to the last man.

Geisha, A Life by Mineko Iwasaki (2003, Memoir) The memoir of a celebrated geisha, rich in details, culture, and the traditions of Kyoto’s Gion Kobu district. The book provides a rare and intimate glimpse into a hidden world from the Japanese woman who was also the primary source for Arthur Golden’s best-selling novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

Suggested Films & Videos

Japan

Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011, Documentary) A loving documentary about Jiro Ono, the first sushi chief to win the coveted three-star rating from Michelin. A good choice for both foodies and the sushi novice.

Lost in Translation (2003, Drama) Sofia Coppola’s acclaimed romantic/comedy/drama centers around two lost souls—a bored former movie star played by Bill Murray, and the listless young wife of a photographer played by Scarlett Johansson—who make connections as they wander around Tokyo.

Godzilla (1956, Horror/Monster) The original Japanese monster flick maybe campy and silly, but it spawned a serious business—over 28 sequels and remakes—plus it created a serious icon of Japanese pop culture. Fun fact: Godzilla has his own star on the Hollywood walk of fame.

Memoirs of a Geisha (2005, Drama) Movie adaptation of the novel by the same name. A romantic and sweeping story that won Oscars for cinematography, art direction, and costumes.

Spirited Away (2001, Anime) It may seem odd to suggest an animated film, but the Japanese-based Studio Ghibli is such a cultural touchstone that we had to include at least one of their films! And while other titles like *Kiki's Delivery Service* or *Howl's Moving Castle* could have made the cut, it is hard to overlook *Spirited Away*, which blends modern animation with traditional folklore into the story of a 10-year-old girl trying to save her parents from a spell.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

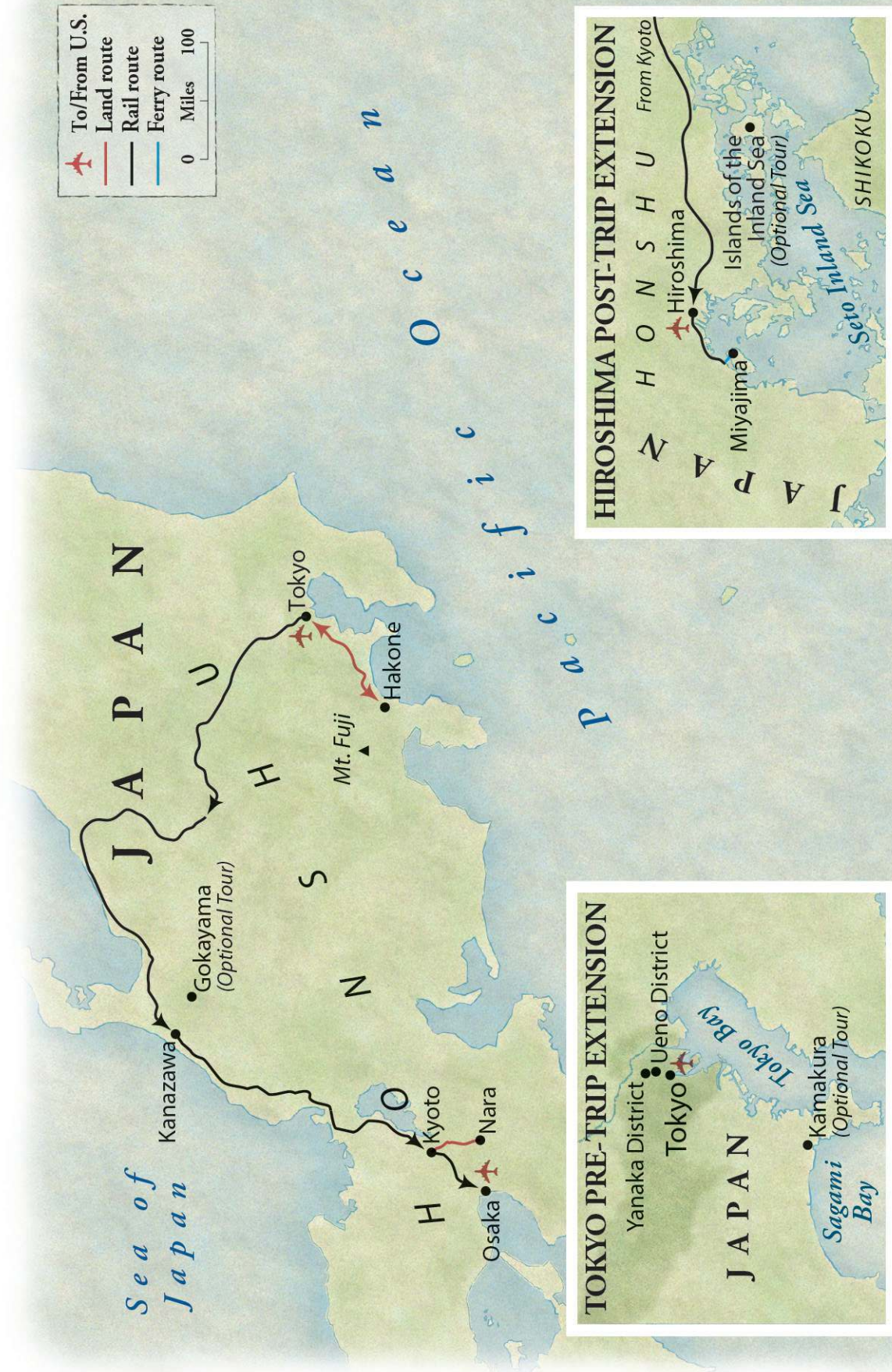
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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