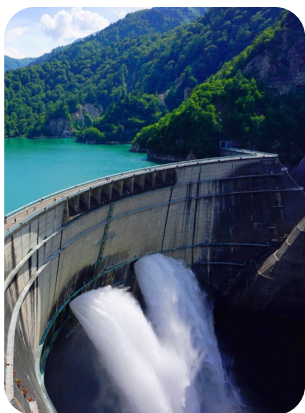


# Chubu, Kansai and Kyushu: A Road Trip Through Historic Japan

Travel the many ancient pathways of Japan through medieval cities and holy shrines. Experience the metropolitan regions and delight in traditional Japanese cuisine and hospitality on this 20-day tour



# TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

## Summary

This huge tour criss-crosses Japan over the course of nearly three packed weeks of activity, adventure, culture and exploration. You'll be following in the footsteps of Japan's feudal lords, poets and monks, putting in at castles, temples, period towns and museums, learning as you go and enjoying the finest food, drink and hospitality the land has to offer.

## Kyushu

Japan's largest southern island, famous for its natural hot springs and fizzing volcanic activity. Explore a region bursting with spectacular nature, culture and cuisine.

## Kansai

This is the nation's cultural centre and historical heart, where the history of Japanese civilisation can be traced alongside the modern world.

## Chubu

Home of the ninja and samurai, the ancient cities of Japan's Central region gather around dramatic mountain ranges.

### DURATION

20 days / 18 nights

### ARRIVAL

Fly into Fukuoka Airport

### DEPARTURE

Depart from Tokyo Haneda Airport

### PERFECT FOR

Small groups who love a touch of culture, history and gastronomy

### WHEN TO VISIT

This tour departs on the 10th of September.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 1: Bon Voyage!*

It's the first day of your trip, with a late morning flight from London Heathrow that takes you into Tokyo Haneda Airport early the next morning. Meals will be provided, and your travel agent will make any extra arrangements, leaving you to go with the flow and nestle into your journey, full of anticipation.

## *Day 2: Sacred Fukuoka*



After an easy transfer at Tokyo Haneda the next morning, there's a short connecting flight to the island of Kyushu, with a light breakfast served onboard to fortify you for the day's adventures. An English-speaking guide will meet you here at Fukuoka Airport and navigate the next week with you, swiftly taking you in a private car for a playful morning at Marine World Uminonakamichi. After a delightful dolphin show with views of Hakata Bay, and a tour of the seal pools and penguins, it's time to truly settle into Japan with your first introduction to its many culinary delights. Your car will take you to the luxury of Luigans Spa & Resort for their tempting terrace barbecue amid palm trees and beachy breezes. Dine on succulent meats, speciality local grilled seafood such as turban shell and prawn, or traditional curry and yakisoba as you catch a restorative breath of fresh air and shimmering sea views.

This afternoon will be your spiritual introduction to the region, first with a trip to Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine an hour south. This is the most important Shinto shrine in the whole country, dedicated to the deified spirit of the exiled scholar and poet Sugawara Michizane who died in 903. Its vast and beautiful grounds are filled with almost 6,000 plum trees. Next to the shrine itself is an ancient plum tree that legend has it uprooted itself to stand vigil. Treat yourself to a *umegae mochi* sold by vendors along the pathways - these sweet beancakes are stamped with the pattern of a plum tree flower.



\*NON-CONTRACTUAL IMAGE

# TRAVEL ITINERARY

For a little pick-me-up, you'll stop by the timber-lined Starbucks Dazaifu Tenmangu Omotesando concept store designed by the renowned architect Kengo Kuma, before a short trip up to Nanzo-in. This is a Buddhist temple of the Shingon sect in the pilgrimage town of Sasaguri. Here you'll gaze upon the world's largest bronze statue of the reclining Buddha, a prominent stop on the Sasaguri Pilgrimage. Hugged by lush forest, this is a site of prayer and peace, with shrines and prayer halls scattered all over. A chief priest of the temple once supposedly won ¥130m after laying his lottery ticket next to a statue of Daikokuten here - the god of fortune. Since then dozens have made similar claims, bringing Nanzo-in a reputation for good luck and prosperity!

By early evening we'll have you ensconced in the sumptuous, airy space of the five-star Grand Hyatt Fukuoka. Take your time to settle in and take advantage of the spa with its Shiatsu massages or the large pool onsite. Tonight your dinner choices are your own - the hotel has a fabulous classic restaurant, Market F, and it's right in the heart of the Hakata district, so many other eateries are close by.

## *Day 3: The History of Saga*

This morning you'll have time to sleep in a little so take your time over the elaborate breakfast spread that greets you at the Grand Hyatt. Feast on homemade yoghurts, jams and pastries, grilled sausages and soft eggs, fresh fruit and classic Japanese breakfast staples of steamed rice, fish and broth. You'll then have time for a little light shopping at Canal City Hakata if you so desire.

By late morning it's time to experience the scenic delights of Fukuoka by train on Rail Kitchen Chikugo, boarding at Nishitetsu Tenjin Station. Tastefully decorated inside and out, with woven bamboo ceilings and bright geometric traditional tiles, these plush dining cars are filled with the scent of meticulously prepared seasonal dishes. Feast your eyes on rolling views of the countryside - from which the train's open kitchen sources its fresh ingredients.

The scenic tour continues after lunch with a river cruise through the ancient castle town of Yanagawa via its grid of historical moats, guided by convivial boatmen on a gondola-like vessel: a *donko bune*. Catch them entertaining the tours with *hassou tobi* (jumping over the bridge) as you pass underneath. Waterways criss-cross this famed old city, with views of swaying willows on riverbanks and the lovely historic townscape.



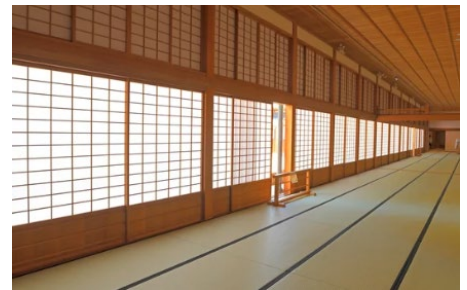


# TRAVEL ITINERARY

Less than an hour South is the prefecture of Saga, where the Saga Castle Honmaru History Museum resides in splendour as a faithful reconstruction of the Honmaru Palace, built by Naomasa Nabeshima, the 10th lord of Saga, in the early 1800s. Some war-torn original parts remain, but the main museum is the largest wooden reconstruction in Japan. Various exhibits covering early Saga and its culture are presented, and the entire interior of the museum is barrier-free, allowing visitors to enjoy the museum as if they were stepping back into the Edo period, when life revolved around this feudal stronghold and its keepers, the Nabeshima clan.



Furuyu Onsen Oncri (three stars) is your home for the night, with 15 kinds of indoor and open-air *onsen* - natural, mineral-rich and restorative hot spring baths. This elegant mountain retreat is surrounded by nature that reaches into the interior. Relax in the Japanese style and soak in the warm waters under the sky, or try a stimulating sand bath before dinner. We recommend dinner in-house, but you may want to peruse the neighbourhood's nearby soba bars and restaurants, perhaps before a night of classic karaoke at the hotel?



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## Day 4: The Airs of Karatsu Bay



Dine on local ingredients with a mountain view at Oncri this morning, before a short trip to Karatsu Castle, perched loftily above the bay and town that share its name. Stroll around the beautiful flower-filled grounds, browse the museum exhibits and step up to the top floor to peek out at the excellent views of Karatsu Bay reaching into the Sea of Genkai on one side and the town on the other.

It's time to dive into an underwater adventure with lunch at Manbou, a floating restaurant that offers diners unique views with service below the waters of the bay at nearby Yobuko. Manbou serves fresh seafood, appropriate for the moment, as Yobuko is a lively market town. Try the local delicacy: tender, fresh-caught squid.

Saga Prefecture has the most famous porcelain regions in Japan, and your next stop is one of international fame: the port city of Imari. Imari porcelain dates back over four centuries, and the ancient methods remain in constant use today. Both new and old works of art are displayed at the Umi no Silk Road museum, and you'll have a hands-on experience in this beautiful replica of a pottery merchant's house. Learn to use the *rokuro*, the traditional pottery wheel, and paint your piece under guidance from expert craftsmen.

Your home for the night is Hirado Island in Nagasaki Bay, at the three-star Hirado Kaijyo Hotel. Here you'll find a refined charm, with the soothing hot water springs of the region directed into stylish onsen baths. An incomparable evening awaits with restful luxury and a multi-course *kaiseki* dinner: a variety of freshly prepared sashimi, steamy bowls of light soup and seafood hot pots, rice, grilled fish and vegetables.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

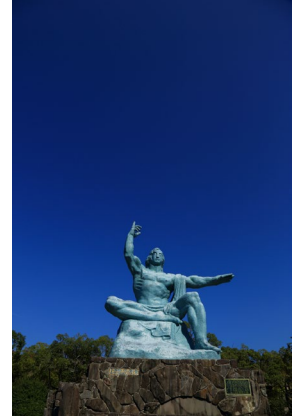
## *Day 5: Battleship Island*

Your English guide meets you this morning after a very early breakfast at the hotel. Together you'll travel eastwards until you reach Takeo Onsen Station for a ride on the Shin-Kyushu Shinkansen, Japan's famous high-speed Bullet Train. You'll zip towards Nagasaki and watch the rural countryside turn into the beautiful coastline further south. A short transfer brings you to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Peace Park, built in remembrance after the devastating end to World War II. Photographs, relics and displays document the history of this momentous moment in Japanese history, showing what life was like in Nagasaki before war cast a shadow over its people.

Later you'll have lunch in Nagasaki style with a meal at Nagasaki Shippoku Hamakatsu, a restaurant serving the unique regional fusion of Japanese, Chinese and European cuisine called *shippoku ryori* that developed in Nagasaki due to its status as a bustling port city. This famous kind of meal is unique to Nagasaki and offers a table full of bowls and plates including dumplings in broth, soft pork belly and raw fish dishes.

This afternoon will be spent at Gunkanjima - an abandoned man-made island resembling a battleship rising from the ocean. Battleship Island, as its name means, once housed a community of thousands of workers and their families in a tiny area after coal was discovered in the 1800s. You'll disembark and investigate an eerie landscape from observation decks, seeing how nature has begun to reclaim these fragile ruins. You may recognise the place - it's been a setting for many films, including the climax of the James Bond movie *Skyfall*.

Once returned to port you'll be whisked away to the modern comforts of the three-star Garden Terrace Nagasaki Hotel & Resort with views of the Nagasaki waterfront and the busy waters beyond. Tonight you'll eat at the hotel's Sushi in the Tenku restaurant. Try the elaborate 'Tenku' sushi dinner: providing varied textures and flavours of Nagasaki seafood, to be enjoyed while viewing the bright twinkling lights of the port below. The private club lounge for hotel guests is perfect for a nightcap.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 6: Shimabara and Kumamoto*



This morning you have a delicious choice: Western-style omelettes, grilled meats and croissants, or a traditional Japanese morning meal of pickles, premium rice, fish and tofu? It's then time to travel a couple of hours east to the foothills of Mt. Unzen, to Shimabara Castle, a five-storey white edifice rising up against the sky. This is a respectful reconstruction of the Edo Period castle design, retaining the original stone walls and moat. Nearby Shinmachi is known as the City of Swimming Carp, its waterways filled with the flashing colours of *nishikigoi* - koi carp.

Lunch will be a fun affair today - you're going to a sushi conveyor restaurant called Onihei. This style of eating is popular in the west and perfected here, with gleaming cuts of fresh sashimi and soft mounds of rice.

You then cross the Ariake Sea by ferry from Shimabara Port and land at Kumamoto. Kumamoto City is most famous for its restored castle, the largest in Japan! It was originally designed by Kato Kiyomasa, a 17th century feudal lord and a true master of castle architecture. Considered one of the most attractive in the country, you can lose yourself in the grounds, where hundreds of cherry trees explode into bright-pink blossoms in spring.

Tonight it's a taste of classic Japanese hospitality at ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kumamoto New Sky, a sleek and modern three-star hotel beside the river. Dinner tonight is up to you, but the city has a thriving food scene which includes the fabulous Japanese restaurant in the hotel itself.



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 7: The 'Hells' of Oita*

This morning you'll have breakfast early at the hotel ahead of an excursion to Kusasenri in the Aso-Kuju National Park, where lush grasslands meet the foot of spectacular Mt. Aso, the largest active volcano in Japan. Standing on the plateau with magma boiling away just a couple of thousand metres below your feet, you can clearly see the still-smoking crater of Mt. Nakadake, one of the most active volcanoes in the world.

Then you're headed to Oita Prefecture, for more stunning panoramic views - this time from the Kokonoe Yume Otsurihashi Bridge. Suspended over a remote tract of forest and the winding Naruko River, this lush, dramatic vista features the bonus beauty of two of Japan's most spectacular waterfalls: Medaki and Odaki.





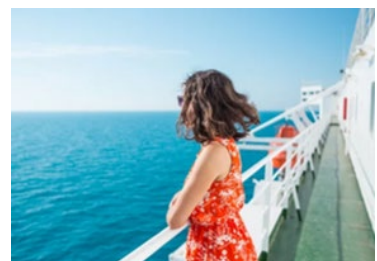
# TRAVEL ITINERARY



You'll find time for a quick bite at one of the casual cafes or restaurants nearby, ready for your next jaunt. This time it's to the colourfully named Umi Jigoku (the 'Sea Hell') - the biggest of Beppu's nine Hells. These vividly coloured natural hot springs are the most startling onsen in Japan. Umi Jigoku was created by a volcanic explosion almost 1,200 years ago and the resulting waters contain high levels of iron sulphate that turn this steaming geothermal pool an astonishing cobalt blue. The waters can reach temperatures of up to 100 celsius, with warning signs that any naive bathers may be boiled! The footpath leading upwards from the spring is lined with red *torii* gates, an eye-catching contrast to the azure pool below. Foot baths are also available in the vicinity.

Your next stop is Chinoike Jigoku (the 'Blood Pond Hell'), where in this case the iron oxide of the clay beneath turns the water a deep red. Though the temperatures are marginally cooler here, it's still extremely hot and steamy. The pond and its remarkable appearance have been found mentioned in records dating back to 700 AD; according to Buddhist beliefs it resembled a nightmarish underworld. Its rich mud is now used as an ingredient in soothing skin products!

These famous Oita onsen mark the end of your time in Kyushu. Come early evening, you'll hop onto the Sunflower Ferry at the port of Beppu. Grab a refreshing draft beer, a sake or even a wine made near your destination of Osaka. There is a generous and diverse buffet on board, as well as a shop, and you're guaranteed a sea view tonight from your cosy cabin.



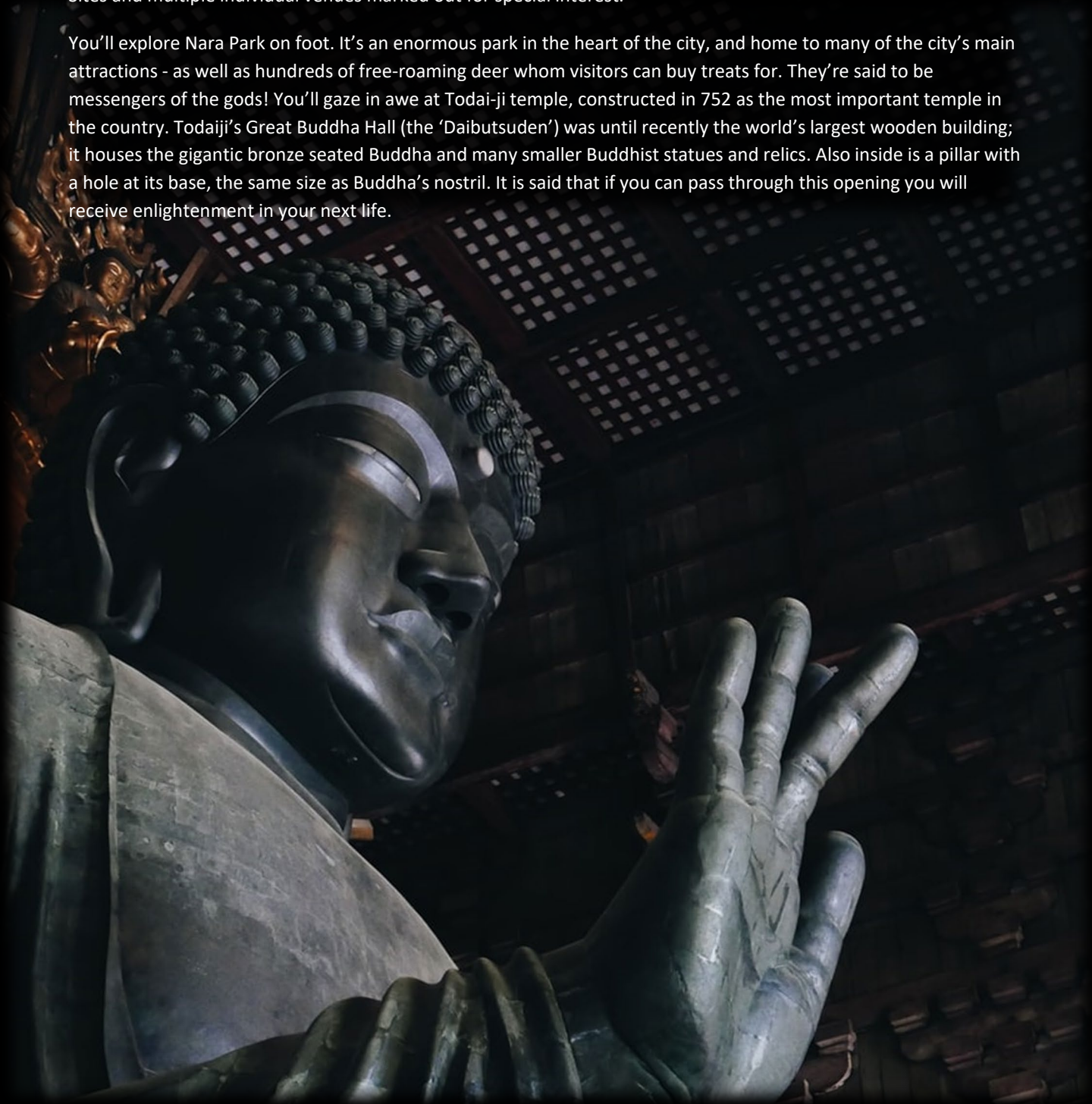
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### *Day 8: Nara, the Ancient Capital*

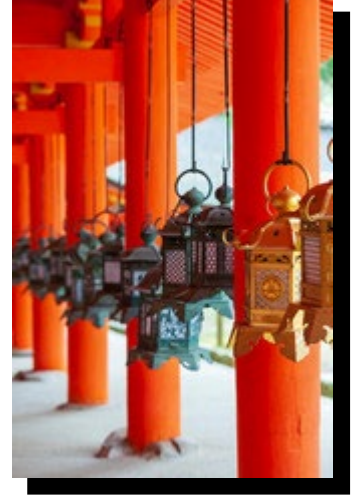
You'll eat breakfast at sea this morning, in the form of a hot, fresh buffet in the restaurant lounge on the Sunflower. As you disembark in Osaka, Japan's second city, you'll catch your first glimpse of Kansai, the next region you'll discover. Your guide for the next two days will meet you in port, and you're straight off to the ancient city of Nara. This was Japan's first permanent capital, from 710 to 784, and a visit here means a chance to understand the most important moments in the growth of the Japan we see now. Unsurprisingly, it boasts three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and multiple individual venues marked out for special interest.

You'll explore Nara Park on foot. It's an enormous park in the heart of the city, and home to many of the city's main attractions - as well as hundreds of free-roaming deer whom visitors can buy treats for. They're said to be messengers of the gods! You'll gaze in awe at Todai-ji temple, constructed in 752 as the most important temple in the country. Todaiji's Great Buddha Hall (the 'Daibutsuden') was until recently the world's largest wooden building; it houses the gigantic bronze seated Buddha and many smaller Buddhist statues and relics. Also inside is a pillar with a hole at its base, the same size as Buddha's nostril. It is said that if you can pass through this opening you will receive enlightenment in your next life.



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

Nara's most celebrated Shinto shrine is also found in the park, built under the instruction of Empress Shotoku when the city's importance was at its peak in the 8th Century. Kasuga Taisha sits in front of the Kasuga Primal Forest, a bright cardinal red against the rich, ancient woodlands. Along the path to the shrine you'll find hundreds of lanterns; explore further inside and you'll see hundreds more bronze lanterns filling the rooms. There are almost 2,000 such lanterns here; many are offerings from worshippers.

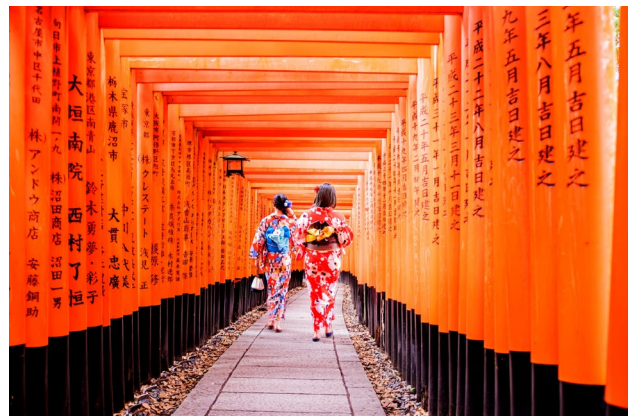


You'll have built up a sightseer's appetite by midday, so it's off to Ippodo Tomigaoka in central Kyoto for all-you-can-eat *yakiniku*. The restaurant specialises in grilled meats like sizzling short rib and fine cuts of Wagyu beef complemented by fresh salads, homemade sauces, rice and dessert.

The town of Uji and its notable Byodo-in Temple is a short drive south. Built as a grand countryside retreat in 998, it has been added to over the years. The Phoenix Hall is one of few Japanese original wooden structures to survive from the Heian Period - around 1,000 years ago - and its prominence in Japanese history is reflected by its presence on the ¥10 coin today.

Your last stop of the day is the spectacular Fushimi Inari Shrine in north Kyoto. Those brilliant red torii gates you wandered through at the blue Beppu onsen are found in their thousands here, forming a network of trails weaving through the peaceful wooded areas of the sacred Mount Inari. Inari is the popular Shinto deity of rice, harvests and prosperity, represented by the form of the humble fox believed to be a messenger from god. You'll find dozens of fox statues scattered around the gardens as you walk the shrine's paths.

Tonight you'll stay in Japan's cultural and historical heart, the inspiring city of Kyoto. After checking into the outstanding Kyoto Century Hotel (four stars), take a moment to freshen up and relax. The night is yours and the hotel is perfectly situated in the centre of the action. Of course the elegant in-house bar and restaurants are available for those who wish to experience impeccable hospitality, but for those feeling more adventurous the city is packed full of nightlife and places to eat.





## *Day 9: Exploring Kyoto*

Kyoto Century Hotel is proud of its grand breakfast buffet so gather your spirits and begin the day with a generous meal before a short walk to Kyoto station. You'll take a short train journey to Kameoka, a pretty city nestled deep in the countryside outside Kyoto. Pleasure boat cruises have been a main attraction since the 19th century, and that's just what you'll do, embarking on the Hozugawa riverboat ride that winds year-round through the majestic Hozugawa Gorge. You'll glide through glittering waters towards Arashiyama, a whispering bamboo grove where lunch will be served at Restaurant Arashiyama on the banks of the Katsura River.

The restaurant prepares seasonal Kyoto produce in the form of *shabu-shabu*, Japanese hotpot with wafer-thin slices of beef and crunchy fresh vegetables cooked in steaming-hot savoury *dashi* broths.

This afternoon will be spent truly getting to know Kyoto's spiritual appeal with a guided tour of its most popular attractions. From Arashiyama's famous groves that provide a peaceful shaded archway of paths, to the Zen temple of Tenryu-ji and the golden pavilion of Kinkaku-ji, you'll learn the enchanting story of Kyoto's place in Japan's cultural history.

Once returned to your hotel it's a second chance to explore the city by night. We highly recommend a moment of cosy luxury in the hotel's sophisticated Main Bar Essex, complete with exceptional views of this city at night.



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 10: Deeper into Kyoto*

It would be impossible to discover all of Kyoto in a single day, so today has been set aside to explore - once you've had breakfast head over to the geisha district of Gion to see these colourfully dressed hostesses on their way to appointments over the wooden Tatsumi Bridge, and take lunch at one of the establishments bordering the canal. You'll have the opportunity to browse Shijo Dori, an upscale shopping street brimming with antiques and souvenirs. Nearby you'll find well-preserved teahouses to sample the authentic tea ceremony.

Foodies will adore Nishiki Market - sometimes known as Kyoto's Kitchen - for a taste of speciality produce and a bustling atmosphere with hundreds of shops, stalls and restaurants.

This medieval imperial capital naturally houses dozens of museums devoted to art, crafts and social history. The Kyoto National Museum has an enormous collection of traditional Japanese artworks, while the Museum of Modern Art hosts an ever-changing series of exhibitions featuring modern Japanese artists of great note. Fans of manga will be thrilled to find a treasure trove of exhibits at the Kyoto International Manga Museum!

Dining tonight is your choice once more. For a real taste of Kyoto head to Pontocho and dine on the floating platforms that line the Kamogawa River.

## *Day 11: A Coastal Cruise*

It's time to leave Kyoto and head to the coastal town of Ine with your tour guide for the next week. After breakfast you'll travel up to Ineura Preservation District, a quaint old port lined with the traditional wooden buildings of yesteryear. You'll set off for a mid-morning sightseeing tour of the old fishing town by boat, putting in at Amanohashidate further along the coast. Here you'll take lunch at the shore of the Aso Sea in the bayside Italian restaurant Un Son Benir, which serves handmade pasta dishes made from premium local produce.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

Following the coastline east to your next stop, you'll reach the city of Obama in Fukui Prefecture by early afternoon. You'll check in at Obama Machiya Stay, a cute traditional inn for travellers that was once a private townhouse in this historic town. The living quarters hold their own kitchens for those that wish to cook themselves after an afternoon walking around the carefully preserved ancient streets. Obama looks over Wakasa Bay, and there are many delicious restaurants that feature the freshest seafood for dinner tonight.

## OBAMA MACHIYA STAY





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 12: Gold Leaf in Kanazawa*

This morning you are free to cook your own breakfast in the kitchen. Enjoy a coffee in the inn's peaceful garden, before departing for Kanazawa in Chubu, the central Japanese heartlands. Kanazawa boasts many historical attractions, but its foremost is the focus of your late-morning sightseeing: Kenrokuen, one of Japan's three best landscape gardens, considered by many to be the most beautiful of them all. Its name means 'Garden of the Six Sublimities', and it opened to the public in the late 1800s as a picturesque garden to display all four seasons. The six factors deemed essential to an ideal garden are those of spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and broad views. Accordingly, the grounds are filled with water features, wooden structures and bridges, perfectly manicured borders and glassy ponds.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY



Omicho Market is close by for a seafood feast come lunchtime. Omicho has been Kanazawa's largest fresh food market since the Edo Period, and hundreds of covered stalls form a maze of culinary delights. You'll enjoy a bountiful bowl of kaisen donburi, fragrant rice topped with a mound of exquisite seafood including fresh fatty tuna belly and pearls of umami-rich salmon roe.

After eating your fill it's time for an engrossing hour at Kanazawa Katani for the gold leaf experience. The art of gold lacquer has been practised and produced in Kanazawa for over 120 years. Under guidance of a master craftsman, you can choose from 60 types of seal to decorate your own trinket or plate. At the end the finished product is yours to keep!

Modern Kanazawa remains a focal point of culture and innovation, and thus a stay in the city wouldn't be complete without a visit to the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art. An architectural masterpiece, it's one large, circular building that allows guests to approach the artworks from any direction.

You'll be welcomed for the night by the upscale embrace of either the ANA Crowne Plaza Kanazawa or the Hotel Nikko Kanazawa. Dinner is up to you this evening, served either at the hotel or at one of the many nearby options.



©Photo credit Kanazawa City

# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 13: High up in the Japanese Alps*

Breakfast is served early this morning before a day of sightseeing in the Japanese Alps. You'll be following the course of the Tateyama Alpine route, starting at Bijodaira and its landscape of centuries-old primaeval forest, which is only accessible by cable car. From the viewing platform you'll gaze upon the towering clusters of cedar and beech from a 1km vantage point. A connecting bus will take you on the vertiginous route around the base of Mt Tate Tateyama to Murodo, the highest observation point on the route, replete with restaurants, a tea room, shops and even an onsen.

Murodo is 2,500m above sea level, and there's often powdery snow cloaking the area even in the summer months. The Emmadai Observation deck a few paces away offers a clear view of the wispy, smoking sulfuric Jigokudani (meaning 'Hell Valley') hot spring. In old folklore, the high peak of Mt. Tateyama came to represent heaven, overlooking the steaming 'hell' bubbling beneath.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

You'll have time to grab lunch before embarking on the Tateyama Trolley Bus. This subterranean bus powers through the hard rock of Tateyama itself and emerges on the other side. Your destination is the Panorama Terrace at Daikanbo, which also serves as a connection via ropeway to Kurobedaira, set amongst the verdant greenery that climbs the slopes from Kurobe river valley below. You'll join the river where it meets the Kurobe Dam for splendid views and a short boat trip to enjoy a view of the frothing waters that pour forth at the dam's great barrier.

You'll head to Matsumoto for the night, an ancient city tucked into the valley seam that runs along the base of the Japanese Alps. The city is most famous for Matsumotodojo, a castle over 400 years old with an awe-inspiring feudal history. Once an enclave of the earliest ninja warriors, it is now a National Treasure of Japan. Remarkably, your hotel for this evening, the three-star Matsumoto Marunouchi, is the only residence inside the castle walls.

Local, flavourful Shinshu wine from the Nagano region is served here at the in-house French fusion restaurant - an excellent choice for dinner. For those wishing to travel further afield, Matsumoto is a cosmopolitan city with a broad choice of restaurants.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 14: Matsumoto Castle*

Your hotel breakfast is served in the retro stylings of the former Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank, a stately 1940s building with vaulted ceilings and original features. Premium provisions from the local area provide a luxurious flair this morning.

Your morning will be spent at Matsumoto Castle - which is well known as the Matsumoto Castle for its black walls - treading lightly through the wooden interior of this well-preserved feudal monument. Look out for hosts dressed as ninjas and samurai in the castle grounds, entertaining visitors with authentic displays of warrior skill. Afterwards, you'll have free time to roam Nawate Street for a little souvenir shopping, and find a spot of lunch at one of the many characterful eateries that line this traditional Edo Period district.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY



\*NON-CONTRACTUAL IMAGE

On your way down to picture-perfect Narai in the heart of the Kiso Mountains, you'll make a stop to peruse the eponymous lacquerware of Kiso Hirasawa. The classic, skilled simplicity of Kiso lacquerware is one of Japan's most beautiful crafts, and used in culinary settings to present simple dishes of miso and rice.



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

Later, you'll meander through Narai-juku, a small town so carefully conserved that it feels like you're walking through a film set! Your dinner is at BYAKU Narai, a convivial former sake brewery that retains the original wooden beams and character of a rustic, bygone era. Each room in this five-star inn has been designed in a unique, timeless fashion.





## TRAVEL ITINERARY

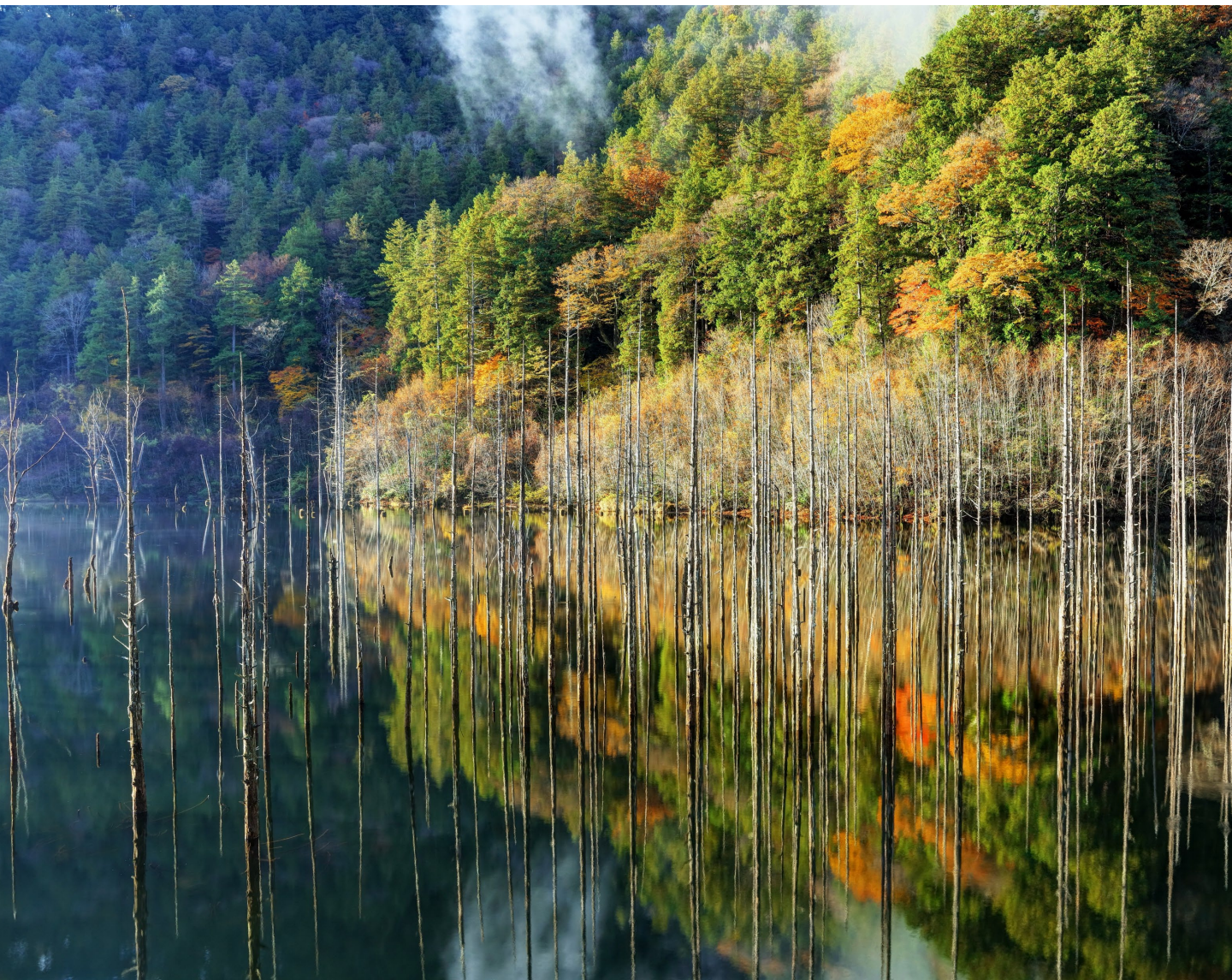
### *Day 15: The Cormorant Fishermen of River Kiso*

A splendid hot breakfast at BYAKU Narai begins another fine day in Chubu. You'll take to the calm waters of Lake Ontake on hired canoes, gently paddling around in the crisp, cool mountain air. The lake tour base camp is next to the village of Otaki, and professional instructors will guide you out onto the glossy waterways.

Lunch is at Nezame-tei in the sweet old town of Agematsu, chosen for its regional specialities and unrivalled view of the landmark Nezame no Toko, meaning 'Bed of Awakening', a heritage site that gets its name from its famously stimulating views.



\*NON-CONTRACTUAL IMAGE





## TRAVEL ITINERARY

It's a couple of hours' journey to the boutique Hotel Indigo Inuyama Urakuen (3.5 stars) in central Inuyama. You've time for a quick pit stop in comfort before an unusual dinner served on the banks of the River Kiso. Tonight you'll learn about the unique tradition of cormorant fishing, where next to crackling bonfires you'll board fishing boats and observe local fishermen use their feathered friends to catch sweetfish in the clear waters. They'll grill these over charcoal and serve them with a crisp, cold beer - truly a once-in-a-lifetime dining experience!





### *Day 16: Stately Nagoya*

Breakfast is at Hotel Indigo ahead of a morning of sightseeing around Inuyama and its hilltop castle. Then it's off to Nagoya, Japan's fourth largest city. The culinary epicentre of Nagoya is found in a space built by the Owari Tokugawa family - the one-time shoguns of Japan. The Hosa is a popular local food hall with counters and tables surrounding open kitchens and an array of options. The simple, regional cuisine celebrates the culinary traditions that have deep roots in Edo Period customs.

Nagoya Castle was one of the first to be designated a National Treasure. Beautifully crafted original works of art fill the preserved interior rooms, while the manicured grounds are filled with cherry trees.





## TRAVEL ITINERARY



You'll have some time to wander the grounds before an afternoon of culture and natural beauty at the serene Tokugawa-en gardens and the Tokugawa Art Museum, which contains a priceless collection of samurai artefacts, furnishings, and heirlooms.

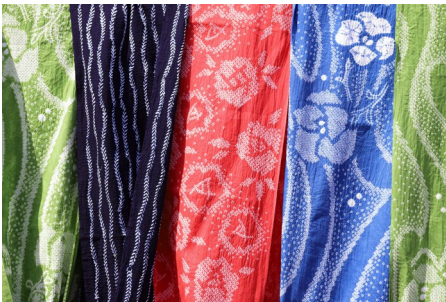
Dinner is up to you tonight, after settling into the five-star Nagoya Marriott Associa. Staff can make excellent restaurant recommendations, or you can take it easy tonight and eat at the hotel.





# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## Day 17: Around Nagoya



You have a little time this morning for a leisurely breakfast and then it's off for a full day of sightseeing! This relaxed metropolis contains long-established merchant areas such as the Narumi cotton-trading district. Arimatsu has an artistic history with *arimatsu shibori*, a method of tie-dye created in the 1600s and still practised today. You'll stop by the Furukawa Art Museum for a foray into the city's artistic development, and take a spiritual walk through the Atsuta Jingu Shrine, which was founded to house Kusanagi no Tsurugi, a legendary sword of ancient times. The site now holds a treasure trove of swords and other weaponry.

Meals are up to you today and we encourage you to sample the local cuisine. You'll encounter dishes specific to Nagoya in the form of *Nagoya meshi*, hearty fare that covers everything from unusually deep red miso paste, the rich Taiwan ramen of garlicky mincemeat in broth to the popular homely classic, *teppan* spaghetti. As the name suggests, this is a pasta dish with bites of pork sausage, mixed in with a beaten egg and a ketchup sauce!

Later you can investigate the local bars or have a night in at the Marriott with its extensive list of premium whisky and cocktails before retiring for the night.



# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 18: Welcome to Tokyo*

It's time to say goodbye to ancient Japan and prepare for an exciting city break in modern Tokyo. Your luggage will be sent ahead and you'll board the Bullet Train to Shinagawa, with an English guide to direct you upon arrival. A private car will whisk you to Tsukiji Outer Market for lunch at this world-renowned seafood marketplace, and a quick tour of the busy stalls and shops.

Tokyo is known for its progressive culture and your next stop is the wildly conceptual, immersive teamLab Planets exhibition. You are encouraged to immerse yourself in a gigantic, overwhelming visual experience - a revelation for the senses. We won't ruin the surprise, but suffice it to say that you'll be barefoot throughout, and standing in water for part of it, as you surrender your senses. It will be a fun, interactive afternoon even for those who have very little knowledge of modern art.



teamLab, *Floating Flower Garden*; *Flowers and I are of the Same Root, the garden and I are One* © teamLab



# TRAVEL ITINERARY



For a little shopping, you'll be directed to the market streets of Nakamise, a historic avenue selling handicrafts and souvenirs, on your way to Senso-ji, a central Tokyo Temple of great religious importance in the Asakusa district. It's one of Tokyo's most popular temples and arguably its oldest, drawing droves of tourists to its stunning architecture and colourful character.

Before dinner there's a moment for a coffee break at the Owl Cafe, where you can interact with the cafe's adorable residents. You won't just meet cute owls - there are parrots, meerkats and snakes in this famous animal cafe.

After rendezvousing with your luggage at Shinagawa Prince Hotel (three stars) you'll have free time to take pleasure in everything Tokyo has to offer. The hotel will of course have recommendations, but if a spirited restaurant scene is your aim then the districts of Shinjuku and Shibuya have so much to offer!



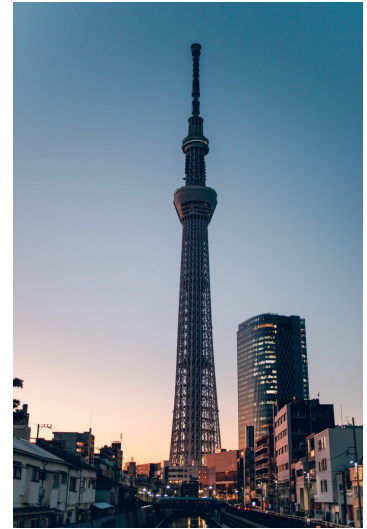
# TRAVEL ITINERARY

## *Day 19: Exploring the Metropolis*

There's a whole day to explore after breakfast! Tokyo has everything you could hope for from such a fashionable, eclectic city. History and innovation sit side by side here, and we advise you to come with a plan. You can move between the districts with ease on the famously efficient Tokyo Metro. Why not take tea in Minato City, ascend the ultra-modern Tokyo Skytree for its jaw-dropping views across the city, indulge in gastronomic curiosity on Kappabashi Street or even catch a sumo event at Ryogoku Kokugikan?

If you prefer to escape the city limits, there's an optional tour of the iconic Mt Fuji and the natural beauty of Hakone at the foot of the world-famous tourist attraction on offer.

And on your very last night in Japan you have full freedom once more, either to take advantage of the hotel's comforts or branch out into the diverse Tokyo night.



## *Day 20: Sayonara (for now!)*

Say a sleepy sayonara to Tokyo this morning before an early departure from Haneda Airport, and watch the misty Tokyo morning and distant Mt Fuji disappear as you head towards your final destination at Heathrow. We hope you have a comfortable trip home with time to reflect on such an incredible voyage through the sacred history of Japan.



# TOUR DETAILS

## *Tour fees:*

- Two to three passengers: From ¥ 2,359,800 per person
- Four to five passengers: From ¥ 1,507,400 per person
- Six passengers: From ¥ 1,223,200 per person
- Single supplement: Please enquire

*Based on a 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 departure*

## *Included:*

- Board: 18 nights at three, four or five-star hotels, two nights at a guesthouse, one night on a ferry
- Meals: 16 breakfasts, 11 lunches, five dinners
- Bullet Train: Two journeys in reserved second-class seats - Takeo Onsen to Nagasaki, Nagoya to Tokyo
- English-speaking guide and assistant: Per itinerary (including tip and allowance)
- Entrance and activity fees: Per itinerary
- Local transport: Bus, private car, ropeway, boat trips, ferry and trains, all per itinerary

## *Excluded:*

- International and domestic flights
- Drinks
- Certain meals, per itinerary
- Personal expenses
- Optional tour on Day 19
- Other items not mentioned in the itinerary