

MAJESTIC JAPAN

March 29, 2020 - 16 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:
\$12,095 double/twin
\$13,755 single



tour
a more intimate travel experience

- > Please add 0.3% GST.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$300 discount on first 8 seats; \$150 on next 4
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 200 points from this tour.
Redeem **200 points** if you book by **December 17**.

Includes

- Transportation to/from Vancouver Airport
- Flight on Japan Airlines to Tokyo and return from Osaka
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- 14 nights of hotel accommodation and taxes
- 10 days of coach transportation in Japan
- English-speaking Japanese guide for 14 days
- Transfer from Tokyo Airport to hotel
- Locally-guided tour of Tokyo
- Tokyo Sky Tree observatory
- Asakusa District
- Imperial Palace
- Meganebashi Bridge
- Enoshima Samuel Cocking Garden
- Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine
- Mount Fuji
- Hakone National Park
- Cruise on Ashinoko Lake
- Hakone Tozan switchback train
- Hakone Ropeway on Mount Owakudani
- Matsumoto Castle
- Daio Wasabi Farm
- Kusakabe Folk Crafts Museum
- Yatai Kaikan Festival Float Museum
- Shirakawago UNESCO Site with Wada House
- Kenrokuen Garden
- Sakuda Crafts to make gold-leaf chopsticks
- Limited Express Train from Kanazawa to Kyoto
- Shinkansen Bullet Train from Kyoto to Hiroshima
- Hiroshima Peace Memorial and A-Bomb Dome
- Miyajima Island with round trip ferry
- Shinkansen Bullet Train from Hiroshima to Himeji
- Courier transfer of luggage while on Shinkansen
- Himeji Castle
- Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion)
- Nijo Castle
- Japanese Tea Ceremony
- Todaiji Temple with Buddha statue
- Nara Deer Park
- Kasuga Grand Shrine
- Transfer to Osaka Airport
- Gratuities for guides and drivers in Japan
- Luggage handling at hotels
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- **32 meals:** 14 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 11 dinners

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Experience Japan with Wells Gray Tours!

Japan is an archipelago of 6,852 islands. The four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku which together comprise about 97% of Japan's land area. Japan has the world's tenth-largest population with over 126 million people. Honshu's Greater Tokyo Area includes the capital city of Tokyo and is the largest metropolitan area in the world with over 30 million residents. The characters that make up Japan's name mean "sun-origin" and this is why it is sometimes called the "Land of the Rising Sun".

Archaeological research indicates that people lived in Japan as early as the Upper Paleolithic period. The first written mention of Japan is in Chinese history texts from the 1st century AD. Influence from other nations followed by long periods of isolation has characterized Japan's history. From the 12th century until 1868, Japan was ruled by successive feudal military dictatorships (shogunates) in the name of the Emperor. In 1868, the Empire of Japan was proclaimed with the Emperor as a divine symbol of the nation. Since adopting its revised constitution in 1947, Japan has maintained a unitary constitutional monarchy with an emperor and an elected legislature called the Diet.

A major economic power, Japan has the world's third-largest economy and is also the world's fourth-largest exporter and importer. Although Japan has officially renounced its right to declare war, it maintains a modern military with the fifth largest military budget, used for self-defence and peacekeeping roles. Japan has the second lowest homicide rate in the world, after Singapore. Japanese women have the second highest life expectancy in the world.

This tour explores highlights of Honshu, starting with two days in bustling Tokyo. Then we travel across the island to the north coast at Kanazawa. Thrill to the advanced technology of the famous Bullet Train from Kyoto to Hiroshima, then finish in Kyoto, and fly home from Osaka.

Come and experience majestic Japan with Wells Gray Tours! This is the first in-depth tour of the country that we have offered. The 2020 Summer Olympics are in Japan, so this is a great opportunity to visit some Olympics venues and attractions, then watch them on TV and say "I was there".

Tour Notes

Currency & Expenses: The currency in Japan is the yen and, as of August 2019, a Canadian dollar is worth 81 yen. You should order yen from your bank 1-2 weeks before departure, or plan to use ATMs. Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere. Gratuities have been included for all Japanese guides and drivers. Tipping is not expected for meals you buy on your own; in fact, this practice is considered rude. All breakfasts, some lunches, and most dinners are included. Costs for meals and attractions you choose yourself are generally higher than in Canada. A meal at an average restaurant can range from 1000 to 3000 yen, or much higher at a fancy restaurant. This tour has been planned and priced 8 months before departure, so it is possible that exchange fluctuations could affect the fare, in which case you will be notified of the increase or decrease.

Documentation: A passport is required and must be valid until you return to Canada on April 13. A Visa is not required.

Flight upgrades: Please enquire about current prices for upgrades on the flights between Vancouver and Tokyo or Osaka. Premium economy and business class may be available.

Rooms for singles are often a different style or smaller size than twin rooms. Many hotels also limit the number of single rooms allocated to a group, so please book early if you prefer to travel single.

Triples are not available on this tour.

Health: You may need a vaccination. Please visit a travel clinic two or three months before departure. Bring this itinerary and your personal vaccination record for advice.



Activity Level: Due to the historic nature of some attractions, it will be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces, and walk at least a kilometre, plus stand for an extended time on walking tours. This tour is not appropriate for people who require the use of a walker. There can be long walks in the airports and you are urged to request a cart at check-in if this could be a concern.

The coaches and trains cannot carry a scooter. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, drivers and local guides have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be asked to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

Itinerary

Sunday, March 29:

Meals: D

After pickups around Greater Victoria, transportation is provided to New Westminster where we stay at the Inn at Westminster Quay. Meet the BC Interior travellers at a get-acquainted dinner.

Note: While it may seem unnecessary to travel to Vancouver the day before your flight, ferries and planes can be cancelled due to weather or other issues.

Monday, March 30:

Meals: B

We leave in late morning to go to Vancouver Airport. Our flight on Japan Airlines to **Tokyo** leaves at 2 pm, flight time of 10 hours. We cross the International Date Line, regaining this day on our return.

Tuesday, March 31:

We arrive at Narita Airport about 4:30 pm. **Welcome to Japan!** We are met by our local driver and guide, and drive into central Tokyo. Greater Tokyo has a population of 38 million people and is considered the world's most populous metropolitan area. Our accommodation for the next three nights is the Keio Plaza Hotel.

Wednesday, April 1:

Meals: B,D

The first stop on our Tokyo tour is **Tokyo Sky Tree** which is 634 metres high, the tallest free-standing broadcasting tower in the world. We ride up to the first observatory for a panoramic view across the bustling city. Then we head to the **Asakusa District** — a jolt to the senses where we leave behind the ultra-modern bustle to discover the quiet side streets of this traditionally styled district. Asakusa was an entertainment district in the Edo era, but lost its role in the modern era. Nowadays, it is home to charming shops and restaurants. Walk along Nakamise Street, a centuries old souvenir street of 96 shop stalls, do some shopping for that perfect souvenir, or pick up a local delicacy for lunch. Afterwards, we visit the **Imperial Palace**, home of the Japanese Royal Family. This classic Japanese castle is surrounded by a moat and has beautiful simplistic greenery. Take a photo in front of the charming Meganebashi (or spectacles) bridge which has a distinctive European flare. Finally, explore some of Tokyo's latest trends and fashions in **Shibuya**, a famous shopping district. Take in the hectic pace of Tokyo as you attempt to cross the world famous "scramble" crossroad.

Thursday, April 2:

Meals: B,D

We take a day trip to **Kamakura**, the former de facto capital of Japan which was the seat of the Shogunate during the Kamakura Period (1185 - 1333). Once the largest city in the world, the Kamakura of today is a small, sleepy seaside town with numerous temples and shrines. Attractions today are: Enoshima Samuel Cocking Garden, Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine, and Komachi-Dori Shopping Street. Tonight, we walk to a restaurant in the Shinjuku area for dinner.

Friday, April 3:

Meals: B,L,D

We leave busy Tokyo and today is devoted to visiting **Mount Fuji and Hakone National Park**. First, we cruise on a majestic replica pirate ship across **Ashinoko Lake**, formed by a volcanic eruption over 3,000 years ago. Then we take a scenic ride on **Hakone Tozan switchback train**, zigzagging through the mountains with terrific views of the surrounding valleys. Watch for a glimpse of Mount Fuji, but keep in mind that he is notoriously shy and needs a clear day to be seen in full splendour. The symmetrical volcano towers to 3,776 metres, highest in Japan, and last erupted three centuries ago. In Hakone National Park, we ride the **Hakone Ropeway** all the way up Mount Owakudani, soaring over sulphurous fumes emanating from hot springs and rivers in this volcanic area. At the top, try the famous hardboiled egg, cooked at the source of the springs, and add seven years to your life, according to local lore! Back on our coach, we drive to Suwa and stay overnight at Rako Hananoi Hotel.

Saturday, April 4:

Meals: B,L,D

Matsumoto Castle is one of the most complete and beautiful castles in Japan. Built over 500 years ago, the wooden interiors provide an authentic experience quite different to the large rebuilt castles in other cities. The observation deck on the sixth floor of the main keep offers a view over the surrounding city. Later, we visit the Daio Wasabi Farm, known for its watermills. This afternoon, we drive to **Takayama** and stay two nights at Hida Hotel Plaza.

Sunday, April 5:

Meals: B,D

What sets Takayama apart from most large Japanese cities is that it has retained many of its original wooden houses and there are few modern high-rise buildings. Founded in the late 16th century, its compact old town, known as 'Little Kyoto', is

home to traditional tea houses and shops. This morning, we visit the **Miyagawa Open Air Market**, Kusakabe Folk Crafts Museum, and Kami Sannomachi Town with its old homes, shops, coffee houses, and sake breweries. This afternoon, we are at the Yatai Kaikan Festival Float Museum where you can see some of the elaborately crafted floats or 'yatai' that are paraded through the streets during festivals in spring and autumn.

Monday, April 6:

Meals: B,L,D

Enjoy a scenic drive through the picturesque countryside to the rural region of **Shirakawago**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where we see fascinating examples of old steep thatched roof houses. This unique architectural style, harmonized into the magnificent mountain landscape, was developed over 100 years ago to survive the harsh winters. We visit Wada House and learn more about daily life in this remote area. We continue to **Kanazawa** near the north coast. During the afternoon, we stroll around Kenrokuen Garden and go to Sakuda Crafts to make your own gold-leaf chopsticks. We stay one night at ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kanazawa.

Tuesday, April 7:

Meals: B,L,D

Note: Please pack a carry-on bag with your overnight things because your suitcase is shipped by courier to Hiroshima and arrives tomorrow.

Today, we have an exciting experience aboard Japan's efficient railway system. We ride on the **Limited Express Train (Thunderbird)** from Kanazawa to Kyoto, then switch to the famous **Bullet Train (Shinkansen)**. These trains have a maximum operating speed with passengers of 320 kph, although tests have reached over 600 kph. It takes us only 1 hour and 40 minutes to travel 354 km to **Hiroshima** across western Honshu. A Bento box lunch is provided on this train. This afternoon, we visit the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park** and A-Bomb Dome which was one of the few buildings that survived the 1945 atomic bomb. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the A-Bomb Dome is a tangible link to Hiroshima's unique past. We stay two nights at Hotel Granvia Hiroshima.

Wednesday, April 8:

Meals: B,L,D

Miyajima Island is situated in southwestern Hiroshima. It is a scenic site where the mountains, sea, and red shrine buildings blend together in harmony, and the entire island is designated as a historic site. A 15-minute ferry ride takes us over to the

island. The Itsukushima-jinja Shrine, built in the 10th century, along with the O-torii Gate in the sea are world icons and create a wonderful contrast with the dark green woods and deep blue sea. There is a shopping opportunity at the Miyajima Traditional Handicrafts Centre.

Thursday, April 9:

Meals: B,L,D

We walk to Hiroshima station and take a one-hour ride on the Bullet Train to Himeji. **Himeji Castle** is also known as White Heron Castle due to its white walls and elegant appearance. The castle complex is over 400 years old and comprises over 80 buildings, connected by a series of gates and winding paths. This afternoon, we drive into Kyoto and stay four nights at Kyoto Century Hotel.

Friday, April 10:

Meals: B,L

Kyoto has great significance in the annals of Japanese history. Serving as Japan's capital for more than 1,000 years, **Kyoto** is the historic centre of the country, filled with temples, shrines, imperial villas, and other memorials to the past. About 20% of Japan's national treasures are here. Although the modern age has taken its toll, Kyoto exudes a graceful charm reminiscent of the splendour of Japan's ancient past, from its narrow residential streets lined with temples and traditional wooden homes to its many craft stores that have been passed down for generations. In more recent history, this is where the UN Panel on Global Warming met in 1997 and 37 countries signed the Kyoto Accord. There is no other city in Japan quite like it. First, we visit **Kinkakuji Temple** or Golden Pavilion, one of Kyoto's most famous sights due to the brilliance of its three-storey gold-leafed pavilion and its moss garden and teahouses. **Nijo Castle** is an old "Shogun" residence, built in 1603 by the first Tokugawa shogun. Of several buildings, Ninomaru Palace is the most notable, famous for its "nightingale floors" which squeak when trod upon to alert guards about intruders. The palace is surrounded by a garden designed by Kobori Enshu, one of the most prominent gardeners of his time. Next we participate in a traditional **Japanese tea ceremony**. The whole process is not about drinking tea, but is about aesthetics, preparing a bowl of tea from your heart.

Saturday, April 11:

Meals: B,D

First, we visit the jaw-dropping **Todaiji Temple**, the world's largest wooden building. Enter the enormous wooden gateway, towering over 25 metres

high and fashioned from 800-year old trees, passing the guardian king statues of the temple. Next, head inside to see the world's largest bronze Buddha statue, enveloped in a golden halo. **Nara Deer Park** is one of the oldest parks in Japan and about 1,200 tame yet wild deer freely roam its grounds. Considered in Shintoism to be sacred messengers of the gods, the deer are protected as national treasures and they call this park home. Also in the park is the photogenic Kasuga Grand Shrine which is surrounded by dense woods and features 3,000 stone lanterns lining pathways and hanging from eaves. A farewell dinner is planned this evening.

Sunday, April 12:

Meals: B

This is a day at leisure. You may wish to take a stroll around the pretty Gion district which is a preserved area of old Japanese houses.

Monday, April 13:

Meals: B

We drive to Osaka Airport this morning. We fly on Japan Airlines in mid-afternoon, change in Tokyo, then continue to Vancouver. We cross the International Date Line and arrive at noon on the same date. Transportation is provided to Victoria and your pickup point.



Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due December 17, 2019. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Cancellation Policy: Up to November 15, 2019, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From November 16 to December 17, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From December 18 to January 17, 2020, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. After January 17, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and currency exchange rates, and surcharges from airlines and tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Tour 25: This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

Photo Credit: Tourism Japan (Mount Fuji)

e-points: This tour earns 200 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points for a free tour! Redemptions offered until December 17.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842