

# MAJESTIC JAPAN

Featuring 2 weeks of highlights of Honshu

March 25, 2024 – 16 Days

50<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

WELLS GRAY TOURS  
a world to experience



Japanese Temple

Bamboo Forest

Experience the ancient traditions and modern life on the first in-depth tour of Japan ever offered by Wells Gray Tours. This tour explores the highlights of the island of Honshu, starting with two days in bustling Tokyo. A full day is devoted to visiting Mount Fuji and Hakone National Park. Other notables are a cruise across Ashinoko Lake with views of Mount Fuji, the unique thatched-roof houses of Shirakawago, a tour of the island of Miyajima, a trip over the Owakudani hot springs on the Hakone Ropeway, and the jaw-dropping Todaiji Temple which contains the world's largest bronze Buddha statue. We ride the famous Bullet Train twice and finish the tour with four nights in Kyoto, the historic centre of the country. This tour is an unforgettable journey with many intimate discoveries along the way, rich in both scenic beauty and cultural heritage.



INTERNATIONAL  
TOUR



GROUP SIZE



ACTIVITY LEVEL

► **32 Meals Included:**

14 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 11 dinners

► **Fares per person:**

\$13,585 double/twin; \$15,390 single  
Please add 0.2% GST.

► **Experience Points:** Earn 219 points from this tour.

► **Departure from:** Victoria



Providing Quality Packaged Travel Since 1972

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Monday, March 25

Departures are from Victoria and we travel by coach to New Westminster. We stay overnight at the Inn at the Quay, overlooking the Fraser River. Meet your fellow travellers during a get-acquainted dinner.

**Note:** While it may seem unnecessary to travel to New Westminster the day before your flight, ferries and flights from Victoria can shut down unexpectedly which would cause a missed international flight.

**Meals included:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Inn at the Quay

### Day 2: Tuesday, March 26

Our flight on Japan Airlines to **Tokyo** leaves about 2 pm, flight time of 10 hours. We cross the International Date Line, regaining this day on our return.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

### Day 3: Wednesday, March 27

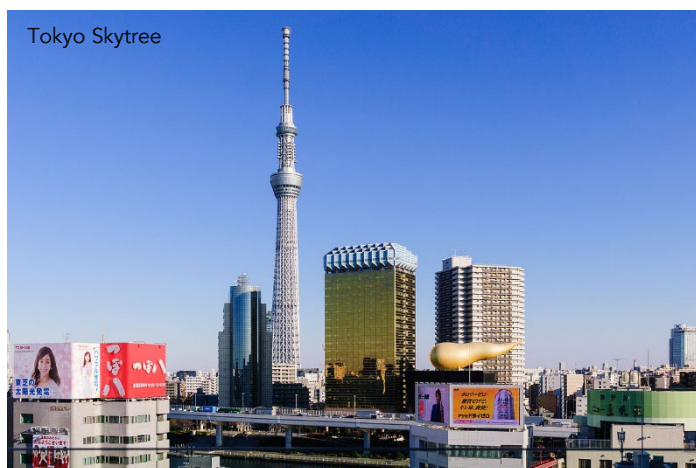
We arrive at Tokyo Narita Airport about 4:30 pm.

**Welcome to Japan!** We are met by our Japanese guide and driver, and drive into central Tokyo. Greater Tokyo has a population of 38 million people and is considered the world's most populous metropolitan area.

**Accommodation:** Keio Plaza Hotel

### Day 4: Thursday, March 28

The first stop on a guided city tour is **Tokyo Skytree** 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 Megane-bashi (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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Keio Plaza Hotel

### Day 5: Friday, March 29

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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Keio Plaza Hotel

### Day 6: Saturday, March 30

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. 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. We ride the **Hakone Tozan switchback train**, zigzagging though the mountains, with fabulous views of the surrounding valleys. 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 hard-boiled 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**.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Rako Hananoi Hotel



### Day 7: Sunday, March 31

**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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Tookyu Stay Hida, Takayama

### Day 8: Monday, April 1

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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 San-nomachi 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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Tookyu Stay Hida, Takayama

### Day 9: Tuesday, April 2

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 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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel

### Day 10: Wednesday, April 3

**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. 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 Dome is a tangible link to Hiroshima's unique past.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Granvia Hiroshima



### Day 11: Thursday, April 4

**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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Granvia Hiroshima



### Day 12: Friday, April 5

We walk to Hiroshima station and take a one-hour ride to Himeji on the Bullet Train. **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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo

### Day 13: Saturday, April 6

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. 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, a prominent gardener of his time. 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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo

### Day 14: Sunday, April 7

For 74 years during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Nara was Japan’s first capital, and became the centre of power and prosperity. It was the face of Japanese culture and politics and ushered in a great number of changes. First, we visit the jaw-dropping **Todaiji Temple**, the world’s biggest 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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo



### Day 15: Monday, April 8

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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo

### Day 16: Tuesday, April 9

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 your pickup point in the Victoria area.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 about 38 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 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Influence from other nations followed by long periods of isolation has characterized Japan's history. From the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 the tour with four nights 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 (other than 2020 which had to be cancelled just before departure due to the sudden onset of Covid-19).

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## TOUR NOTES

**Currency & Expenses:** The currency in Japan is the yen and, as of June 2023, a Canadian dollar is worth 106 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 9 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 9, 2024. 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.

**Flight seating:** We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$2,100 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.

**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.



This tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.



## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transportation to/from Vancouver Airport
- Japan Airlines flight from Vancouver to Tokyo
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fee for 1 suitcase per person
- 14 nights of hotel accommodation and taxes
- 11 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 Tozan switchback train
- Hakone National Park
- Cruise on Ashinoko Lake
- 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 Kyoto to Hiroshima
- Hiroshima Peace Memorial and A-Bomb Dome
- Miyajima Island with round trip ferry
- Shinkansen Bullet Train 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
- Flight from Osaka via Tokyo to Vancouver
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- Gratuities for guides and drivers in Japan
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **32 meals:** 14 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 11 dinners



Tea Ceremony



**Activity Level 2:** 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 depend on a walker. There can be long walks in the airports and you are urged to request a cart or wheelchair 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. **Everybody** participating in this tour is expected to be capable of handling Activity Level 2. 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.

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## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due December 14, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking or cheque (1.5% discount on tour fare), or by Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person on credit cards).

**Bonus for previously booked customers:** \$300 discount because your tour was cancelled with 2 weeks notice due to Covid. You must book by Tuesday, July 14, 2023 to claim this discount.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to November 14, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From November 15 to December 14, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From December 15, 2023 to January 15, 2024, the cancellation charge is 60% of the tour fare. After January 15, there is no refund.

**Itinerary and Fare Changes:** Due to continuing after effects of the pandemic, sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

**Food Allergies:** You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Please do not tell us about your food preferences, as restaurants ignore these requests. An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.

**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.

**Photo Credits:** AdobeStock (Temple, Bamboo Forest, Tea Ceremony), Wikimedia (Skytree, Shinkansen train, Buddha), Japan Tourism (Mount Fuji), Pixabay (O-Torii Gate), Goway Travel (Kinkakuji Temple)

**Experience Points or E-points:** This tour earns 219 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn e-points that are added to your account after the tour returns. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your earned points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until December 14, 2023.

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

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### VICTORIA

102-736 Broughton St.  
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1  
250-590-7889

### KAMLOOPS

(Head Office)  
250 Lansdowne St.  
Kamloops, BC V2C 1X7  
250-374-0831

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