A scenic view of Mount Fuji, a large snow-capped mountain, reflected in a calm body of water. In the foreground, there are pink cherry blossom branches on the left. A small blue boat with a person is visible on the water. The sky is clear blue.

Your travel guide to Japan



WELCOME TO YOUR GUIDE TO

Japan

Ready to book the trip of a lifetime to Japan?
With so much to see and do, it's natural to feel
overwhelmed. But don't worry – we're here to help you
every step of the way, making the process simple, stress-
free, and tailored to your dream holiday.

Hokkaido



What you'll find in this guide:

- **Expert guidance**
We have travelled through Japan extensively to find the best experiences and recommendations for you.
- **Different ways to travel**
From exploring by bullet train or escorted tour, we'll talk you through all the options to find your travel style.
- **Advice on when and where to go**
We'll recommend the best regions and best times to visit based on different interests.
- **Tips for your journey**
We'll guide you through Japan's cultural etiquette, unique cuisine, and key communications, so you can travel with confidence.



Why book your holiday with us?

- **We have 20 years of experience**
Our award-winning team has been dedicated to creating bespoke experiences for over two decades.
- **Every trip is customised**
Tailored to your preferences for the best Japanese experience.
- **We work with trusted local partners**
They will be there for you around the clock, allowing peace of mind.
- **You can fly from regional airports**
We offer flights across the UK and Ireland for added convenience.
- **Your money is safe with us.**
We're fully licensed with ATOL in the UK and IAA in Ireland, ensuring top service and financial security.

THE BEST TIMES TO VISIT JAPAN

Whether you're chasing cherry blossoms, autumn leaves, or mountain hikes, Japan is a country best explored with the seasons in mind. Japan experiences four distinct seasons, each offering its own charm.

You can travel to Japan year-round, as each season brings new events and fantastic landscapes.

No matter when you go, we recommend at least one week, but 10-14 days is ideal for a truly memorable trip, especially if you want to explore off-the-beaten-track destinations.

We also advise booking your trip 12 months in advance to get the best availability.

Spring (March to May)

Spring is Japan's most popular season, when cherry blossoms cover the cities and the countryside in soft pink. Mild temperatures make it ideal for exploring, with flower festivals and temple visits during this time of celebration.

Summer (June to August)

Summer is vibrant and full of energy, with hot, humid weather. It's festival season, expect fireworks, dancing, and lantern-lit celebrations. Nature is lush and green, ideal for hikes and exploring cooler mountains.

Autumn (September to November)

Autumn is another favourite, bringing comfortable temperatures and a spectacular show of red and amber leaves across the country. It's perfect for scenic walks, harvest festivals and enjoying the beauty of Japan's gardens.

Winter (December to February)

Winter is crisp and quiet, with snowy mountains and hot springs steaming in the cold air. New Year celebrations give this season a magical feel.



Hiroshima



Fukuoka



Okinawa Islands



Kyoto



Kyoto



Kanazawa



Japanese Alps



Tokyo



Hakone National Park and Mount Fuji



Osaka



OUR TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Japan offers a blend of timeless favourites and hidden gems. With incredibly varied regions, there is something for every kind of traveller.

Beyond the usual

City lovers will feel right at home in **Tokyo**, Japan's buzzing capital. From futuristic skylines and vibrant neighbourhoods to serene temples and historic corners, Tokyo blends modern energy with tradition, offering something for everyone. Visit Yanaka Ginza for an off the beaten track lunch, followed by a gorgeous sunset view from the Shibuya Sky Observatory. Finish with Jiyugaoka, for a truly fabulous dinner.

Just outside Tokyo, **Hakone National Park** entices nature lovers with hot springs, hiking trails, and breathtaking views of **Mount Fuji**. Adventurer seekers can cruise Lake Ashi, ride ropeways, or even tackle the ultimate challenge, climbing Mount Fuji.

Adventure seekers flock to the **Japanese Alps** for hiking and dramatic landscapes. Explore Chubu Sangaku National Park, wander traditional villages like Takayama and Magome for a fabulous hike between the two, combining outdoor thrills and cultural charm.

Set along the Sea of Japan, **Kanazawa**, known as the Little Kyoto, is ideal for culture explorers. Visit the exquisite Kenrokuen Garden, stroll preserved samurai and geisha districts, and discover a slower, more traditional side of Japan, that is rich in heritage and beautifully preserved neighbourhoods. For amazing seafood head to Ōmichō Ichiba.

Kyoto, Japan's cultural heart and former capital, enchants with over 1,000 temples and shrines. Explore Fushimi Inari's vermilion gates, Gion's historic geisha district, and serene gems like Kodaiji Temple or Arashiyama Bamboo Forest. In the evening, wander atmospheric Pontocho's lantern-lit alleyways, where hidden teahouses and restaurants capture the city's timeless allure.

Known as Japan's kitchen, **Osaka** is a paradise for foodies. Try street food favourites like okonomiyaki, explore neon-lit Dotonbori, and enjoy family attractions including Osaka Castle and Universal Studios, perfect for all ages.

“We’ve used Tropical Sky several times and for Japan, we wanted good advice and the best places to see for our budget. The trip was fabulous, and the bullet train was a highlight. Thanks to Mike for giving us great help and advice”

Best known for history, **Hiroshima** offers moving experiences at the Peace Memorial Park and Museum. Try the famous snack, Okonomiyaki in the Shintenchi district. You have to visit Miyajima Island for its famous floating torii gate, stunning natural scenery, incredible temples and beautiful hikes.

Fukuoka is a lively port city and ramen hotspot, making it a must for foodies. With warm weather, friendly locals, and easy access to Kyushu's natural landscapes, it's perfect for relaxed travellers seeking a laid-back city vibe. For a real hidden gem visit Yanagawa, a preserved old town, lined with willow tree branches dipping into 470 kilometres of canals.

Okinawa Islands' subtropical climate, turquoise waters, and sandy beaches create the ultimate retreat. Perfect for divers and snorkellers, the islands also offer unique Ryukyu culture, making them ideal for travellers seeking relaxation with a cultural twist.



JAPANESE ADVENTURE

Getting around

Getting around Japan is easy and stress-free, making it the perfect destination for exploration. We recommend four fantastic options for your trip – here's our advice to help you make the most of it!



The Shinkansen (Bullet Train)

Japan's Bullet Train isn't just transport; it's an experience in itself. Sleek, smooth, and remarkably efficient, it whisks you between cities in comfort and speed, making it the perfect get-around option for our twin and multi-centre holidays. A must for any visitor, the Shinkansen combines futuristic travel with breathtaking views, making it the ideal way to easily explore multiple destinations with ease.

Escorted tours

Our escorted tours let you discover Japan in comfort, travelling with a group of like-minded people and a knowledgeable guide to ensure you don't miss any highlights.

Many of our customers say they've made lifelong friends on these trips, as it's a great opportunity to meet people while exploring Japan. Perfect for solo travellers or couples looking to make new connections, our tours offer a wonderful way to enjoy the country with others. For a more intimate experience, consider our small group escorted tours.





Domestic flights

Japan offers affordable domestic flights between regions, and our twin and multi-centre holidays make the most of this fast, efficient way to travel. Perfect for all kinds of travellers, domestic flights are the quickest way to travel between distant locations, making the most of your visit. These flexible itineraries offer a deeper, more varied understanding of Japan's unique heritage, landscapes, and modern charm, all in a single itinerary.



Cruises

Indulge in a collection of luxury cruises around Japan, where every detail blends comfort and adventure. Sail effortlessly between vibrant cities and tranquil islands, enjoying panoramic views from the deck and immersive shore excursions. Discover Japan's culture, traditions, and natural beauty in style, all while unpacking just once. For the ultimate adventure, combine your cruise with a tailor-made land tour for a truly unforgettable journey.





CULTURE OF JAPAN

Japan is a country rich in tradition, where etiquette, cuisine, and communication are deeply rooted in respect and harmony. Understanding a few key customs will help you connect more meaningfully and travel with confidence.

“We had an idea of what we wanted to see and do in Japan, but Alan brought our adventure to another level of excitement, with great ideas, tips and a few extra nights in certain spots. What a brilliant trip!”

Cultural etiquette

Greeting and respect

Bowing is the traditional Japanese greeting. Depth and duration indicate the level of respect. As a visitor, a slight bow of the head is often appropriate.

Removing shoes is respectful and sometimes mandatory when entering homes, temples and other establishments. Look for shoe racks upon entry and follow others' example.

Public behaviour

- Keep your voice low in public, especially on trains and buses.
- Keep your rubbish with you, there are very few rubbish bins in public.
- Avoid eating while walking, as it is considered impolite. Drinking is fine.
- Don't smoke or vape in public areas; find a designated or quieter area.
- Hotel smoking rooms are normal; we'll book you non-smoking rooms.
- Exposed tattoos are not allowed in most swimming pools and onsen.
- Most toilets do not have hand towels, as it is cultural to bring your own.
- Japan has a heavy cash culture, although cards are sometimes accepted.



Food in Japan

Cuisine

Japanese cuisine is incredibly delicious and is often much cheaper compared to the UK. Here are a few must-try dishes:

Sushi – Vinegared rice typically combined with seafood or vegetables

Ramen – Wheat noodles served in several flavours of broth

Tempura – Lightly battered and fried seafood or vegetables

Okonomiyaki – Teppanyaki savoury pancakes with other ingredients, commonly cabbage, meat or seafood

Miso soup – Soup consisting of miso in a dashi stock

Kaiseki – Multi-course traditional meal

Sashimi – Sliced seafood, often served with soy sauce for dipping

Wagashi – Beautifully presented, plant-based, Japanese sweets



Communication tips

Language

English is often spoken in tourist areas, but fluency varies considerably. Be prepared for signs and menus to be in Japanese.

- Hello – **Kon'nichiwa** (KOHN-nee-chee-wah)
- Thank you – **Arigatou gozaimasu** (ah-ree-gah-toh goh-zah-ee-mahs)
- Excuse me/I'm sorry – **Sumimasen** (soo-mee-mah-sen)
- Yes – **Hai** (hi)
- No – **lie** (ee-eh)
- Goodbye – **Sayonara** (sah-yoh-nah-rah)
- Good morning – **Ohayou gozaimasu** (oh-HAI-yohh goh-ZAI-mahs)
- Good evening – **Konbanwa** (KOHN-bahn-wah)



Cruise inspiration



Kyoto



Kochi city



Busan

Uncover Japan's highlights in style on this suggested two-week cruise itinerary. From neon-lit streets to vast ocean views, each stop brings a new adventure, and we tailor every itinerary to you

DAY 1-2: Tokyo

Begin your adventure in Tokyo, where futuristic skylines meet centuries-old traditions. Enjoy a day in Tokyo before your cruise departure. Wander neon-lit districts, browse designer boutiques, and sample the city's famed sushi or steaming bowls of ramen. Visit Tokyo Tower for sweeping views or escape to serene gardens and ancient shrines on the city's edge. With some extra time the next morning, you can dive into Tokyo's vibrant neighbourhoods before boarding your ship in the afternoon, ready for the voyage ahead.

DAY 4-5: Kyoto

Step ashore in Osaka, gateway to Kyoto's timeless wonders. Choose to explore the dazzling Osaka Aquarium or the thrills of Universal Studios, or venture inland to Kyoto, Japan's cultural heart. Discover golden temples, tranquil gardens, and atmospheric shrines, each echoing more than a thousand years of history. Whether you opt for guided excursions or your own path, Kyoto offers endless enchantment.

DAY 6: Kochi

Arrive in Kochi, a welcoming city on Shikoku's southern coast. Climb Mount Godaisan to see temples and lush botanical gardens, or join a market stroll in Kochi City to sample Katsuo no tataki, the region's famous seared tuna. This charming port blends history, flavours, and local warmth in equal measure.

DAY 7: At Sea

A day on the water invites rest and renewal. Spend time by the pool, attend a cooking demonstration, or simply gaze across the horizon. As you unwind, the anticipation of new discoveries builds with each passing mile.

DAY 8: Busan

Cross into South Korea to vibrant Busan, a city framed by mountains and sea. Climb Busan Tower for city panoramas, visit serene Beomeosa Temple, or recharge in one of Asia's largest spas. Markets, beaches, and bustling streets add energy to this cosmopolitan port.

DAY 7: At Sea

Sail into relaxation as the open ocean unfolds around you. Stroll the decks, indulge in a spa treatment, or linger over gourmet dining as the ship's crew ensures every detail is seamless. Exciting excursions and discoveries await at the next port.

DAY 9: Nagasaki

Back in Japan, Nagasaki enchants with its blend of history and beauty. Explore lush gardens, visit the Nagasaki Peace Park, or discover the city's European and Chinese influences in its architecture and cuisine. Scenic viewpoints and lively festivals ensure every moment in this unique harbour city feels special.

DAY 10: Kagoshima

Bask in the southern charm of Kagoshima, where palm-lined streets meet views of Sakurajima volcano. Explore traditional gardens, fascinating museums, and the Shiroyama park viewpoint, or venture to Yakushima Island, a lush UNESCO World Heritage site. Hot springs and spa retreats offer the perfect way to unwind.

DAY 11: At Sea

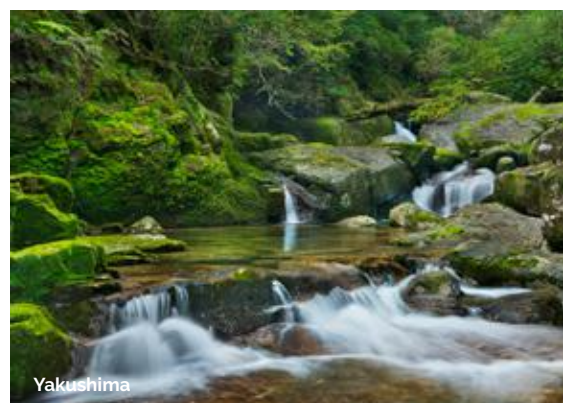
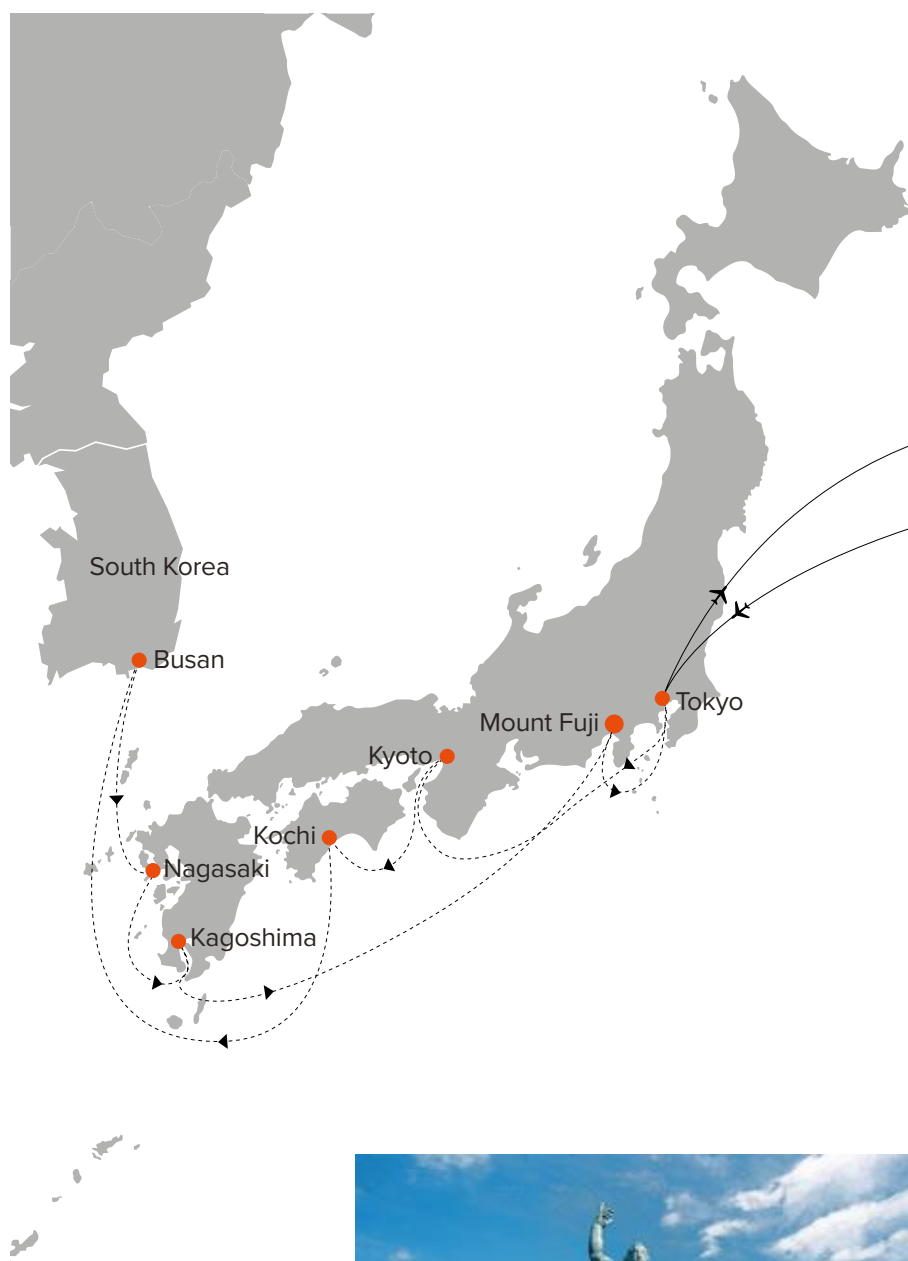
Let the rhythm of the ocean set the pace. Savour fine dining, attend onboard lectures, or share stories with fellow travellers as you drift toward one of Japan's most iconic landscapes.

DAY 12: Mount Fuji

Behold the majesty of Mount Fuji, Japan's sacred peak. Whether admired from a lakeside cruise, a countryside village, or a mountain viewpoint, this snow-capped icon is unforgettable. Shore excursions let you explore nearby shrines, trails, or hot springs, each framed by Fuji's grandeur.

DAY 13-14: Tokyo

Return to Tokyo for a final chance to soak in its contrasts. Shop for last-minute treasures, sip tea in a quiet garden, or revisit favourite sights before your onward journey. Though the cruise concludes, the memories of Japan's rich culture, cuisine, and landscapes will stay with you forever.





Escorted rail tour inspiration



Shukkeien garden



Himeji castle



Shirakawago

Uncover Japan's rail system in style on this suggested three-week escorted tour itinerary. From temples to forests, each stop brings a new adventure, and we tailor every itinerary to you.

DAY 1-2: Fukuoka

Start your journey in Fukuoka, Kyushu's lively hub of food and heritage. Explore at leisure before a day trip to Nagasaki, where you'll stroll through Glover Garden, admire the Oura Catholic Church, and reflect at the Atomic Bomb Museum before returning to Fukuoka.

DAY 3-4: Hiroshima

Board the famous bullet train to Hiroshima. Ferry to Miyajima Island, to see the iconic floating torii of Itsukushima Shrine, and make momiji manju. The next day, visit Peace Memorial Park, savour okonomiyaki, admire views from Orizuru Tower, and relax in Shukkeien Garden.

DAY 5-6: Osaka

On route to Osaka, visit the spectacular Himeji Castle and Kokoen Garden. In Osaka, marvel at the Umeda Sky Building and sample street food in vibrant Dotonbori. A side trip to Nara reveals the Great Buddha at Todaiji Temple and a chance to try a calligraphy class

DAY 7-8: Kyoto

Step into timeless Kyoto for your next two days. Wander the Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, Ryoanji's Zen stones, and the shimmering Golden Pavilion. The next day, explore Kiyomizu-dera Temple, join a tea ceremony, paint your own fan, and wander the historic lanes of Gion.

DAY 9: Kanazawa

Arrive in Kanazawa, where you will spend your ninth day. Discover Kenrokuen Garden, one of Japan's three Great Gardens, tour the Nomura Samurai House, and see traditional Kutani pottery.

DAY 10-11: Takayama

Travel to the mountains, stopping in Inami for sake tasting before exploring the thatched-roof houses of Shirakawago Village. In Takayama, browse the bustling Miyagawa Market, see dazzling festival floats, and visit the historic Takayama Jinya.

DAY 12-13: Matsumoto

Journey into the Alps to Matsumoto. Walk through scenic forested valleys to hot pools in Jigokudani, in search of snow monkeys, then return for Matsumoto Castle, miso tasting, and explore the charming post town of Naraijuku.

DAY 14: Hakone

Travel to Hakone, where you will ascend to Mount Fuji's 5th Station for breathtaking views. Embark on a tranquil cruise on Lake Ashi, and glide skyward on the Komagatake Ropeway.

DAY 15-16: Tokyo

Arrive in Tokyo and stroll through the tranquil Hamarikyu Gardens. Over two days, join a sushi-making class, visit Sensoji Temple, and browse Nakamise Street. Admire views from the Tokyo Metropolitan Building, experience Meiji Jingu Shrine's calm, drive past the iconic Shibuya Crossing and conclude with a relaxing dinner cruise.

DAY 17: Sendai

Head north to Sendai, the largest city in Tohoku, for day 17. Cruise Matsushima Bay, dotted with pine-covered islets, and visit the famous Nikka Whisky distillery.

DAY 18: Hakodate

Travel to Hakodate to see the star-shaped Goryokaku Fortress. Ascend Mt Hakodate Ropeway for stunning views, relaxing in your spare time.

DAY 19-21: Sapporo

Conclude your rail adventure in Sapporo, famous for its Clock Tower, Odori Park, and celebrated beer. Raise a glass at the Sapporo Beer Museum and enjoy a farewell dinner. If you have more time, we'd recommend adding another three or four days and exploring Ryukyu Archipelago's stunning islands, starting on Okinawa and visiting Kume, Miyako and Yaeyama Islands.

Your dream Japanese adventure awaits...

We tailor every itinerary around you. Whether it's scenic road trips, flights and trains between cities, or adjusting durations and destinations, it's all possible. Speak with our travel experts today and let us create a holiday that's uniquely yours.





Contact Us

For more information and help
with tailor making your holiday,
talk to one of our friendly team

9am-7pm Mon-Fri

9am-5pm Sat-Sun

UK: 01342 331799

Ireland: 01 5256778

Or visit:

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