



WORLD TOUR 2016

JAPAN

November 3 – 12, 2016

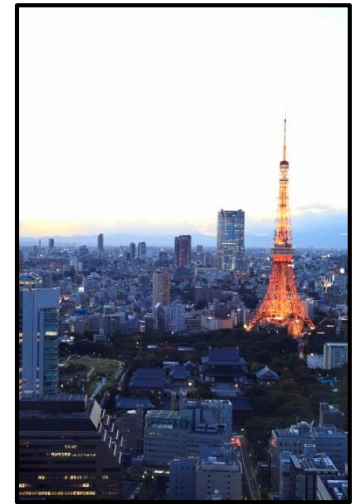


Day One: November 3, 2016 ~ Depart Washington, Dulles Airport via United Airlines

Day Two: November 4, 2016 ~ Arrive Tokyo

One of the world's most cutting-edge capitals, Tokyo is a city of contrasts. Famous for its cutting edge modernity, neon-lit landscape and towering skyscrapers, it is also home to sprawling parkland, peaceful shrines and temples and lovingly tended gardens.

Despite its love affair with manga pop culture, fashion, high-tech trends and conspicuous consumption, below the surface is a city that has its roots in an ancient heritage. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples stand close to skyscrapers as a reminder of a more contemplative time. At the heart of the hyperactive center lies the serene Imperial Palace, home of the ruling emperor, which provides a tangible link to the city's historical past.



The city's reputation as a mega-expensive metropolis is ill conceived and visitors can take advantage of inexpensive izakaya bars and neighborhood cafes that serve delicious noodles and rice dishes. Beyond shopping, entertainment and commercial emporia can be found quaint wooden houses, private gardens with meticulously clipped bonsai trees and the Zen-like calm of the Hamarikyu Gardens.

On arrival at Narita Airport, we will travel 60 to 90 minutes by private coach to our hotel.

Hotel: Westin Tokyo

Meals: Welcome Dinner

Day Three: November 5, 2016 ~ Tokyo Day Tour

Take a day tour of this fascinating city with a local guide. The day begins with a visit to **Hamarikyu garden**, an Edo Period Japanese garden surrounded by the Shiodome district's futuristic skyscrapers, a great example of how Japan is the land of contrasts.

Take a boat cruise on the Sumida River, passing under 12 bridges. Disembark at **Asakusa**, Tokyo's old town, where we can soak in the atmosphere of the Tokyo of old. Visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple and wander down Nakamise, a shopping street that has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional, local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries.



Head to a taiko dojo (practice hall) and enjoy an exciting close encounter with the impressive Japanese drums.

Our teacher will first give us a brief outline of taiko drums, explain how they are made, and their history and significance in Japanese music. Then he will teach us some simple but impressive rhythm patterns, and we will join them together to create a performance, including the poses and vigorous yells that accompany the drumming.

Lastly, travel across town to **Meiji Shrine**, a shrine dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch
Hotel: Westin Tokyo

Day Four: November 6, 2016 ~ Tokyo

Enjoy a half-day exploration by private coach. The **Tokyo Tower** is a television broadcasting tower and landmark of Tokyo. Enjoy the spectacular Tokyo view from the observation deck. Then enjoy a stroll in **Ginza**, Tokyo's most elegant shopping mecca.

We will have free time for lunch and an afternoon at leisure.

Meals: Breakfast
Guiding: English Speaking Guide (morning only)
Hotel: Westin Tokyo

Day Five: November 7, 2016 ~ Tokyo

A day of leisure in Tokyo.

Meals: Breakfast
Hotel: Westin Tokyo

Day Six: November 8, 2016 ~ Hakone/Mt Fuji National Park

Hakone is a natural nature wonderland and is famous for its hot springs, outdoor pursuits and the view of the nearby Mount Fuji. It is part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park and is less than 100-km from Tokyo, thereby providing a popular weekend destination for city residents keen to escape the frenzy of the capital.

Beautiful Hakone has about everything a vacationer could wish for. Besides the towering mountains, lakes and views of Mount Fuji, it is also blessed with interesting historical sites.

Today we leave Tokyo behind as we make the journey to Hakone, the gateway to Mt Fuji and surrounding national park.

Pack an overnight bag as the bulk of **our luggage will be transferred separately** to Osaka.



A majestic ship will sweep us across **Lake Ashinoko**, a lake formed by a volcanic eruption 3,000 years ago and we will ride the **Mt. Komagatake ropeway** for stunning views of the area.

The last stop of the day is the **Hakone Open Air Museum**, which successfully creates a harmonic balance of nature and art. Various sculptures are exhibited on its spacious grounds, coupled with beautiful views of the surrounding valley and mountains. Besides the sculptures, the Hakone Open Air Museum features various indoor galleries, including a sizable Picasso Collection consisting of paintings, prints, sculptures and ceramic creations. We can also relax our tired feet with soak in the hot spring foot bath!

Throughout the day we will have the chance to get a glimpse of Mt Fuji, however please bear in mind that she is a notoriously shy mountain and it needs to be a clear day.

The coach will drop us off at Odawara station where we will catch Japan's world famous Shinkansen bullet train to Osaka. Capable of speeds of up to 185 mph (360km/h), the Shinkansen takes two hours to reach Osaka. We will ride in the spacious, comfortable green class. A coach will then transfer us to our hotel in Osaka.

Meals: Breakfast and lunch

Hotel: Marriott Miyako Osaka

Day Seven: November 9, 2016 ~ Kyoto

This is a must see destination in Japan. Kyoto is the nation's former capital and was the residence of the Emperor from 794 until 1868. It is Japan's seventh largest metropolis with a population of around 1.4 million and a city of culture that offers a plethora of temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures that still survive today.



With 2,000 religious buildings, including 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, as well as palaces, gardens and associated architecture, it is one of the best preserved cities in Japan and has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status.

Kyoto represents the "Japan of old," and beyond the high rise skyscrapers built as a monument to progress, the real monument to Japan's historical and cultural past can be found in the city's narrow alleyways where tea houses abound and kimono-clad geisha hurry from elegant function to function. This is a place to go back in time to Japan's mysterious past where echoes of the court nobility resonate at the Imperial Palace and the search for contemplation can be found in Ryoanji's Zen rock gardens.

Today we will take a day trip to visit some of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites. We will start our day with a visit to **Kinkakuji Temple** (Golden Pavilion), which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun. After his death, it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples.



Nijo Castle is an ornamental castle built by the founder of the Edo Shogunate as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by stunning surrounding gardens. The main building was completed in 1603. It is famous for its architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors.

The next stop is **Kiyomizu** (Pure Water) Temple. From the 13m high veranda jutting out from the Main Hall, we can enjoy amazing views of the whole of Kyoto while pondering the fact that both the Main Hall and Veranda were built without the use of nails or any kind of joiners.

Take a walk down **Nishiki Market**, a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than 100 shops and restaurants. Known as "Kyoto's Kitchen," this lively retail market specializes in all things food related: fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware. It is

a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi.

We will end our day in a tearoom in Kyoto, where we will enjoy an authentic **tea ceremony**.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch
Hotel: Marriott Miyako Osaka

Day Eight: November 10 ~ Osaka

We will start our day visiting the magnificent **Osaka Castle**. The castle is one of Japan's most famous and played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century. It has been completely rebuilt, faithful to the original appearance, after its destruction during World War II. The interior is modern and functional and serves as a museum of Osaka's history.

The next stop is the hustling district of **Dotonbori**, a former pleasure district turned restaurant mecca. We will have free time to sample Osaka's famous street food.

After lunch, our last stop will be the **Floating Garden Observatory**. Built on top of the highest building in Osaka, it is an open air observatory from which we can enjoy stunning views of the city and the bay.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch
Hotel: Marriott Miyako Osaka

Day Nine: November 11 ~ Kyoto and Nara Day Tour

We head to Arashiyama, a pleasant district in the western outskirts of Kyoto. The area has been a popular destination since the Heian Period (794-1185), when nobles would enjoy its natural setting. We'll take a walk through Arashiyama's famous **bamboo groves**, which are particularly attractive when there is a light wind and the tall bamboo stalks sway gently back and forth. The bamboo has been used to manufacture various products, such as baskets, cups, boxes and mats at local workshops for centuries.



Ranked among Kyoto's five great Zen temples, **Tenryuji** is the largest and most impressive temple in Arashiyama. Founded in 1339 at the beginning of the Muromachi Period (1338-1573), the temple is one of Kyoto's UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In addition to its temple buildings, there are attractive gardens with walking paths.

After lunch, we head to Nara. For 74 years during the 8th century Nara was Japan's capital and many of the temples and shrines built at that time still remain.

We will visit **Todaiji temple**, the world's largest wooden building and home to Japan's largest Buddha. We will also wander through **Nara Park**, called Deer Park by locals due to the large population of more than 1,000 tame deer living there.



After transferring back to Osaka, we will enjoy a sumptuous farewell dinner tonight at a local Japanese cuisine restaurant within walking distance from our hotel, including free flowing drinks.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and Farewell dinner

Hotel: Marriott Miyako Osaka

Day Ten: November 12, 2016 ~ Depart Japan/Arrive Washington, DC

Our morning is free at leisure until our afternoon departure for Kansai International Airport.

Meals: Breakfast

Guiding: English-speaking Guide (From hotel to airport)

~ END OF SERVICES ~

Itinerary is subject to change