

## Japan & China: Cultural Contrasts Tour

<b>JAPAN</b>	<b>CHINA</b>
<b>TEMPERATURE RANGE</b> Highs: High 70's Lows: Mid 60's	<b>TEMPERATURE RANGE</b> Highs: High 80's Lows: Low 70's
<b>AREA</b> 377,864 SQ KM 145,894 SQ MILES	<b>AREA</b> 9.6 Million SQ KM 3.7 Million SQ MILES
<b>POPULATION</b> 126.4 Million	<b>POPULATION</b> 1.35 Billion
<b>LANGUAGE</b> Japanese	<b>LANGUAGE</b> Mandarin Chinese
<b>CAPITAL</b> Tokyo	<b>CAPITAL</b> Beijing
<b>CURRENCY</b> Japanese Yen	<b>CURRENCY</b> Chinese Yuan Renminbi

### Day 1

Fly to Tokyo

### Day 2

#### Arrive Tokyo

Upon arrival in Tokyo, you will be privately transferred to the Peninsula Tokyo or Aman Tokyo.

#### Peninsula Tokyo

The 24-story Peninsula has the best luxury hotel location in Tokyo, directly across from enchanting **Hibiya Park** (opened in 1903 as Japan's first Western-style park, the lush, greenery of Hibiya makes it great for a.m. walks and even a 5k run!), Imperial grounds, and adjacent to the amazing Ginza shopping district. Envisioned by architect Kuzukiyo Sato to look like a giant Japanese stone lantern, the freestanding Peninsula combines subtle Japanese hospitality with the Peninsula tradition of understated luxury.

#### Aman Tokyo

Though we are big fans of AMAN in China/Southwest Asia, we initially felt a bit ambivalent about the 84-room AMAN in a noisy, urban environment like Tokyo. Located in the 40-story Otemachi Tower, within walking distance of Ginza shopping/dining, perhaps the most

impressive sight of the AMAN Tokyo is its magnificent 33rd floor lobby lounge/restaurant, with huge floor to ceiling windows looking out to the Imperial gardens and Mt. Fuji on clear days.

The Peninsula Tokyo's ideal location across from beautiful Hibiya Park has always been a big plus for us. Nevertheless, the AMAN's forward looking aesthetics and large Japanese-centered rooms give this property a slight edge over the Peninsula.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Peninsula Tokyo or Aman Tokyo**

### **Day 3**

#### **Tokyo Private Touring**

After breakfast at the Peninsula, you will embark on a full day tour of Tokyo based on your particular interests. The following suggested options, include: Tsukiji Fish Market, Meiji Shrine, Akihabara District of Tokyo, Harajuku Area , Yasukuni Shrine (controversial yet interesting!), and the extraordinary Tokyu Hands Department Store.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Peninsula Tokyo or Aman Tokyo**

### **Day 4**

#### **Shikansen Bullet Train Tokyo/Kyoto**

Upon arrival in Kyoto, you will be privately transferred from Kyoto Station to Hiiragiya Ryokan or Tawaraya Ryokans. With 26 shrines and temples listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (most in the world!), Kyoto is truly one of the most culturally alluring cities on the globe. While staying at either the Hiiragiya or Tawaraya Ryokan, you will served a kaiseki dinner, representing the highest level of Japanese haute cuisine.

#### **Hiiragiya & Tawaraya Ryokans (RL)**

Similar to Tawaraya Ryokan (just across the alley-way), Hiiragiya is considered among the most noteworthy and famous ryokans in all of Japan. Improbably, two of the most famous luxury ryokans in all of Japan stand directly across from each other! A stay at Hiiragiya or Tawaraya represents a complete immersion into traditional Japanese culture. Enclosed in a traditional **sukiya** style wooden structure, Hiiragiya was conceived in 1818 when Hiiragiya, a seafood dealer, began providing accommodation to traveling merchants. Later, Hiiragiya welcomed many members of the imperial family including writers/governing officials/international celebrities. Proprietress Akami Nishimura only modestly acknowledges the many celebrities and world leaders who have stayed here (including Charlie Chaplain many decades ago). We give an A+ to both the Tawaraya and Hiiragiya, although we feel Hiiragiya is perhaps more accommodating and open to Western eccentricities.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Hiiragiya or Tawaraya Ryokan**

## **Day 5**

### **Kyoto + Saihoji Temple**

Following breakfast, you will enjoy a full day private tour including Heian Jingu Shrine, Kinkakuji Temple, Kiyomizu Temple, and Saihoji Temple. There is nothing casual or fortuitous about a visit to Saihoji Temple and its garden. You may visit by prior appointment only (written request to the administering monks.) Later in the day, you will have the option of partaking in a traditional Japanese private tea ceremony at Ms. Suzuki's residence.

### **Ritz Carlton Kyoto**

With the Hyatt Regency Kyoto having been the only western 5-star luxury hotel in Kyoto, we were excited about the February 2014 opening of the 134-room Ritz Carlton Kyoto, which we feel is not only the best +100 room hotel in Japan, but perhaps all of Asia. Living in a Mies van der Rohe high-rise in Chicago, we feel a particular affinity to the Hyatt Regency's simple, clean, architectural design. Nevertheless, the new Ritz Carlton's rectangular, low-slung property, ideally situated in the Kamogawa River, has quickly become the highest quality 5-Star western hotel in Kyoto. Replicating the aesthetics and exterior of a traditional Meiji House, the design and amenities of the Ritz are quite impressive, creating a luxurious sanctuary. Luxury amenities include the best macaroons in all of Japan, a spacious 24-hr fitness center, an EPSA spa, a beautiful 60' indoor pool, and a French Haute Patisserie. Though we are not big fans of the Ritz global brand (prefer AMAN/Peninsula/Mandarin/Four Seasons) we give A+ kudos for their property in Kyoto! The Ritz Carlton Kyoto perfectly captures Omotenashi, the art of selfless hospitality, a cornerstone of Japanese culture.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Ritz Carlton Kyoto**

## **Day 6**

### **Half Day Kyoto Private Touring + Shopping Opportunities**

You will begin your day in with the Philosopher's Walk, a 2 kilometer long path that covers five temples and two shrines, paralleling a beautiful canal/stream. After the walk, you will continue to the Shirakawa Minami-Dori Street in Gion, which has wonderfully preserved wooden structures, with various restaurants and ryokans. In the late afternoon, you will stop at our favorite shops, including but not limited to: Ippodo Tea Company (purveyor of the high quality matcha green tea and the 400 year old Nishiki Market.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Ritz Carlton Kyoto**

## **Day 7**

### **Fly Kyoto/ Hong Kong**

Although we really love Shanghai, it's hard to beat Hong Kong – the picturesque, deep water harbor is always abuzz with ferries, container ships and hydrofoil activity. You will be subsequently driven to the Peninsula or Mandarin. Later in the evening, you will enjoy a 90

minute Junk cruise (with open bar) on Hong Kong's Harbor, one of the most magnificent maritime settings on earth!

### **Mandarin Oriental Hotel**

In contrast to the more grandiose pretension of the Peninsula/Kowloon, the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong truly represents understated luxury. Whenever we return we are always reminded why we love this property: unpretentious, singular luxury coupled with a very sincere, friendly staff that evokes a home away from home feeling. The 2005 renovation resulted in the new Mandarin's former balconies being converted to lounge/study area extensions, with stunning Victoria Harbor views. Zen and Sofia especially like the bathroom/amenities, including the vertical, swivel plasma TV/mirrors—so unique! We feel perhaps no other 5 star deluxe property in Hong Kong offers such a luxurious, peaceful oasis from the noisy, frenetic city as the Mandarin: an A+ in our book!

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Mandarin Oriental Hotel**

### **Day 8**

#### **Hong Kong Private Touring**

After breakfast, you will embark on a full day tour with the following options at your disposal: Peak Tram to Victoria Peak, Aberdeen fishing village, Repulse Bay, and Stanley Main Beach (noted for its striking rock formations). Lunch will be served at Repulse Bay and rest of the afternoon is free at your leisure to explore Hong Kong.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Mandarin Oriental Hotel or Peninsula Hong Kong**

### **Day 9**

Following breakfast, you will immerse yourself in the Chinese culture of jade at the Jade Market. Afterwards, you will have to the option to venture to ancient Bird Market, Wong Tai Sin Temple, and Nathan Road – the most famous shopping strip in Hong Kong.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Mandarin Oriental Hotel or Peninsula Hong Kong**

### **Day 10**

#### **Fly Hong/Beijing**

Depending on your Beijing arrival time, you have the option of a very relaxing jet-lag foot massage en-route to the Rosewood Hotel Beijing. During our last visit to Beijing we were quite surprised to see the large number of local businessmen and power brokers engaged in one hour "power foot massages".

**Rosewood**

The Peninsula Beijing is planning a major renovation in 2016. Though the hotel will remain open during this period, we feel it prudent to use the alternative 5-Star Rosewood Hotel Beijing. Located in the city's Central Business (Chaoyang) District, across from the iconic CCTV Tower, we feel the 2014-opened 283-room/22-story Rosewood to be among the most impressive 5-Star hotels in all of Beijing. Our feedback from corporate clients staying here recently has been most positive! Meaning to recall the ruggedness of a mountain in order to contrast the serenity that awaits inside, the property's exterior is quite unique with its Mongolian-sourced bluestone walls (and two spectacular large bronze lions). A commonality of traditional Chinese architecture, you enter the hotel through an ornate inner courtyard. A local Beijing guide we use spoke glowingly about the classical Chinese gardens (completed by a landscaping company from Thailand) that surround the property and the general "hutong" style lobby layout. The Rosewood includes 6 restaurants, a luxury 32,000 sq. ft. Sense Spa, a very nice fitness center and a striking 9,000 ft. indoor pool on the 6th floor. The 800 sq. ft. Manor Suites are preferred.

**Meals: Breakfast**

**Accommodations: Rosewood Hotel Beijing**

### **Day 11**

#### **Beijing Private Tour**

Today you will have a full day private tour to experience Beijing. More stoic and perhaps less dynamic than free-wheeling Shanghai, Beijing boasts China's major historical and cultural attractions. After breakfast, you will meet your guide and driver to for the following stopovers include Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Hutong neighborhood (boasting a labyrinth-like layout and "Old Beijing" atmosphere), and Factory 798 (formerly a military factory, now modern art museum). For lunch, we will recommend one of our favorite Beijing food spots.

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Rosewood Hotel Beijing**

### **Day 12**

#### **The Great Wall of China Private Tour**

Your journey to the Great Wall will be second to none as you will visit the section lacking the larger crowds of tourists. You will also be provided with a "Great Wall Specialist" for a comprehensive understanding of the ancient Wall. Another plus of this area is that you have the chance to toboggan ride from the top of the wall to the base!

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

**Accommodations: Rosewood Hotel Beijing**

### **Day 13**

#### **Fly Beijing/Shanghai**

Upon arrival in Shanghai, you will be privately transferred to the Peninsula Shanghai.

We feel Shanghai to be a perfect metaphor for China's future – young, dynamic, optimistic and supremely confident. Today you will have a full day of touring options that include the Science and Technology Museum, Old Town and Yu Garden, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Urban Museum, and Xintiandi.

### **Peninsula Shanghai**

Having stayed at nearly all of the 5-star hotels in Shanghai, we can respectfully proclaim the Peninsula Shanghai as not only the best luxury hotel in Shanghai, but the #1 luxury hotel in all of China! We fully believe the Peninsula on **the Bund** has no real peer, at least not in China. Although built nearly three years ago, the property is at home architecturally with the 1920s Art Deco and Neo-classical buildings adjacent to the Bund. We particularly loved the Art Deco-embellished elevators. Notwithstanding the Art Deco-inspired design, the Peninsula Shanghai rooms reflect the spaciousness and amenities of its sister property in Tokyo. The Grand Deluxe River View rooms are large, over 600 square feet, with impressive 46" plasma televisions and panoramic views of the Pudong skyline and Huangpu River. Two very convenient amenities include a wonderful Nespresso coffee machine and complimentary VOIP (Voice-Over Internet Protocol) in the rooms – so convenient for calling family and friends back home!

**Meals: Breakfast**

**Accommodations: Peninsula Shanghai**

### **Day 14**

#### **Shanghai Private Tour**

Today you will start by visiting the Yuyuan Garden, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Ming Dynasty private garden and residence that remains an oasis from Shanghai's crowded lanes and teeming masses. Departing this dynastic Ming period masterpiece, you will journey to Xintiandi for high-end restaurant/shopping/entertainment. In the afternoon, you will venture to M50 Art Gallery District and muse over the flourishing avant-garde artist studios. End your day with the Era Acrobats Show (we feel this is very best acrobats show in all of China!).

**Meals: Breakfast**

**Accommodations: Peninsula Shanghai**

### **Day 15**

After breakfast, you will travel along the famous coast of Huangpu River to Bund, a foreign hub and symbol of Shanghai. An hour drive outside Shanghai, you will have discretionary use of your private driver to the ancient water town of Zhujiajiao.

**Meals: Breakfast**

**Accommodations: Peninsula Shanghai**

### **Day 16**

**Fly Shanghai/Home**

**Meals: Breakfast**

**Accommodations: --**