

JAPAN

TEMPERATURE RANGE

Highs: High 70's

Lows: Mid 60's

AREA

377,864 SQ KM

145,894 SQ MILES

POPULATION

126.4 Million

LANGUAGE

Japanese

CAPITAL

Tokyo

CURRENCY

Japanese Yen

Japan Overview

Bev, Zen and I freely admit Japan is our favorite destination in the entire world! Japan is singular among Asian cultures in its amazing ability to assimilate and then synthesize foreign cultures and influences. The contrast between Japan's orderly, balanced Shinto/Buddhist-centered culture and its hyper-innovative technology-driven economy is compelling. A big part of our fascination with Japan is its unique wabi-sabi aesthetic. Wabi-sabi is a Japanese worldview/state of mind emphasizing simplicity and purity—the beauty and awe of all things humble, imperfect and unpretentious (a beautiful sunrise, the still morning frost, a graceful Japanese tea ceremony). The critical thing is savoring life's simple daily pleasures. Please note our various meticulously-detailed Japan private tour itineraries, based on our family's many travels to this amazing land.

Day 1

Fly to Tokyo

Through our sister company, premium air provider TRAVNET, we may assisted with your international airfare, as well as with mileage points conversion.

Day 2

Arrive Tokyo

Upon arrival in Tokyo, you will then be privately transferred to Tokyo Station for your First Class Shinkansen (Bullet Train) transfer to Hakone.

Gora Kadan (RL)

Gora Kadan is a superb ryokan (traditional inn) that has managed to compromise gracefully with the modern Western world. Proprietress Mikawako, the third generation of Fujimotos to run Gora Kadan, has blended traditional Japanese ryokan hospitality with modern Western design in creating a luxurious ryokan spa experience. The Gora Kadan's original building dates back 300 years and was the summer home of the Kan'in-No-Miya imperial family. With its airy east-west fusion aesthetic, its wonderful (Kaiseki) food service, and total relaxation spa, **Gora Kadan is definitely on our A-list for high-touch ryokans in Japan!**

Meals:--

Accommodations: Gora Kadan

Day 3

Full Day Hakone Private Touring

After breakfast at the Gora Kadan, your private tour options will include Lake Ashi Excursion boats, Jinga Shrine, and the Owakudani Valley, an active volcanic valley famous for blackened boiled eggs! Another stopover is the Hakone Open Air Museum amidst a mountain setting, which successfully balances art with nature. The indoor galleries are also very interesting – most compelling is the museum's significant Picasso collection!

For our more active travelers, we recommend the following enjoyable hike options.

Lake Tanzawa to Yaga (enthusiastically recommended by our United Airlines representative, Suzanne, who once lived near Hakone), Houei Crater Trekking, Mt. Fuji Lava caves deep beneath the ground, and Japan's eerie Demon Forest.

Meals:--

Accommodations: Gora Kadan

Day 4

Transfer via Shikansen Bullet Train Hakone/Kyoto

Upon arrival in Kyoto, you will be met by your private guide and driver and transferred to the Ritz Carlton Kyoto. 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.

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. 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 definitely piqued our interest. Replicating the aesthetics of a traditional Meiji House, the design and amenities of the Ritz are quite impressive (including a French Haute Patisserie!). Though we are not big fans of the Ritz global

brand (prefer AMAN/Peninsula/Mandarin/Four Seasons), we feel the new Ritz to be currently the highest quality luxury “western” hotel in Kyoto.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations: Ritz Carlton Kyoto

Day 5

Kyoto

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

Accommodations: Ritz Carlton Kyoto

Day 6

Saihoji Gardens

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.) Unlike the mass tourism that envelops much of Kyoto, the Saihoji priests hope to retain a solemn, meditative atmosphere in the temple and garden.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations: Ritz Carlton Kyoto

Day 7

Miho Museum Excursion

After breakfast at the Ritz, you will be met by your guide and driver for a full day excursion to the Miho Museum, near the village of Shigaraki. Marvel in the works of ancient civilizations from Egypt, Rome, to South Asia. For dinner you will be served a kaiseki dinner, representing the highest level of Japanese haute cuisine.

Hiiragiya Ryokan (RL)

Similar to Tawaraya Ryokan (just across the alley-way), Hiiragiya is considered among the most note-worthy 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, Dinner

Accommodations: Hiiragiya Ryokan

Day 8

Transfer Kyoto/Naoshima

Upon arrival in Okayama, you will be transferred to Uno Port where you will catch the Ferry to Miyanoura Port, for your stay at Benesse Port in Naoshima. We love the Benesse Art Site Site Naoshima, a truly unparalleled and remote stopover offering aesthetic perfection in contemporary art and architecture.

Benesse House Hotel

The 65-room Benesse House Hotel, the central lodging facility within “Benesse Art Site Naoshima” consists of four buildings: **Museum** (10 rooms) allows close contact with the artworks both in a public exhibition space and in each guestroom; **Oval** (6 rooms), offers beautiful panoramic view of the inland sea and is connected to the museum by a monorail; **Park** (41 rooms) looks out to the green lawn with open-air artworks to the ocean and the mountains of Shikoku on the far shore, and contains an exclusive lounge, a shop and Spa; and **Beach** (8 suites), located on the shoreline with suites only, provides beautiful view of the Seto Inland Sea.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Benesse House

Day 9

Naoshima

After breakfast, you will enjoy a full day private tour of Naoshima including the Chichu Art Museum, Lee Ufan Museum, and the Art House Project. All a part of the Benesse Art Site, this site aims to create significant spaces by bringing contemporary art and architecture in resonance with the pristine nature of the Seto Inland Sea.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations: Benesse House

Day 10

Transfer Naoshima/Hiroshima/Miyajima

Upon arrival in Hiroshima, you will be taken to **Peace Memorial Park** and **Peace Memorial Museum**. Both moving and disturbing, this visit should be a historical eye-opening experience. Considered one of Japan’s three most scenic views and UNESCO site, Miyajima Island will be the next stopover. Later afternoon, you will be transferred to Iwaso Ryokan to enjoy a tranquil night amongst the illuminated shrine of Miyajima Island.

Iwaso Luxury Ryokan

Opened in 1893, Iwaso is the most famous ryokan on Miyajima Island. Set in an idyllic, peaceful setting surrounded by colorful maple trees, hills and wonderful trails, it is a beautiful, relaxing place to stay. Iwaso was constructed in the “miyu-daika” style by the same craftsmen who built Japanese shrines. Another big plus for staying here is the pristine communal onsen baths!

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Iwaso Ryokan

Day 11

Morning Half-Day Miyajima Private Tour + Transfer Miyajima/Tokyo

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

Peninsula Tokyo

The 24-story Peninsula has the best luxury hotel location in Tokyo, directly across from lovely **Hibiya Park** (think 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. The rooms are among the largest in Tokyo, starting at 544 sq ft. Cool amenities range from bedside consoles that control the drapes to Lavazza espresso machines. The rooms even offer the ladies a personal nail dryer! For our jogging friends, the Peninsula offers a nice 5K start to your day. Beginning across the street on the Imperial Palace’s grounds, a full 5K jog runs through the grounds and back through Hibiya Park. Zen rates the hot chocolate and the Peninsula’s amazing “vitality” pool as the best in all of Japan!

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations: Peninsula Tokyo

Day 12

Full Day 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 included, but not limited to, are: 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

Accommodations: Peninsula Tokyo

Day 13

Fly Tokyo/Home

