

NOBLE CALEDONIA

AUTUMN COLOURS OF JAPAN

A 14 day escorted tour of the Gardens,
Temples & Cities of Japan

10th to 23rd November 2020



Lake Ashi and Mount Fuji

Japan is a fascinating country with a unique heritage, ancient traditions and culture juxtaposed with the ultra-modern sprawling metropolises of the world's most advanced technological civilisation. Our escorted overland tour has been designed to give an in-depth view of a relatively small area, combining both modern and traditional Japan and timed for this most magical time of year when the landscapes burst into colour with the arrival of the autumn leaves.



We begin our exploration with the bright neon lights of Tokyo where the mesmerizing cityscape of skyscrapers is interspersed with ancient temples and scenic gardens before making the short journey to Hakone to enjoy the famous hot springs and views across Lake Ashinoko of nearby Mount Fuji. We will also visit Takayama to explore the historic sites, including the hillside temples of this beautiful mountain region before continuing on to the ancient castle town of Kanazawa, home to artisans who produce some of Japan's most celebrated pottery, lacquerware and silks. Here we will visit the colourful Omicho Market to see local life in action and stroll through Kenroku-en Gardens, justifiably classified as one of Japan's most beautiful landscaped gardens. Our final days will be spent in atmospheric Kyoto, this former imperial capital is Japan's cultural treasure house with an astonishing 1600 Buddhist temples, 400 Shinto shrines, a trio of palaces and dozens of gardens and museums.

OUR VIEW

“Japan has been one of our most popular spring destinations for many years but it was during a recent trip I made to the country that I was fortunate to witness the wonderful autumn colours. The leaves of the maple trees and ginkgo trees turn red and yellow presenting beautiful scenery at every turn. We have therefore devised this tour to combine many of the highlights of the country, from temples and gardens to local culture and food with, we hope, the additional benefit of seeing these sites enhanced by the changing seasonal colours.”

Paul Mildon, Head of Planning & Operations



Meiji Shrine Garden

THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Tokyo, Japan.
Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 Tokyo. Arrive this morning and transfer to the Keio Plaza Hotel for our two night stay. The remainder of the day is at leisure to acclimatise before we meet our fellow travellers this evening for a welcome dinner in the hotel. (D)

Day 3 Tokyo. A morning tour will include time in Asakusa, Tokyo's "old town". Visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple and spend time in Nakamise, a shopping street that has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional, local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries. Continue to the Kiyosumi Garden, designated as a National Place of Scenic Beauty in Tokyo, which has been designed in the Kaiyu-rinsen style as a strolling garden. Take time to walk around the central pond and see the stones which have been brought here from all over Japan. Return to

the hotel and enjoy an afternoon at leisure to explore independently before we enjoy dinner tonight in a local restaurant. (B, D)

Day 4 Tokyo & Hakone. After breakfast in the hotel we will make our way to the Meiji Shrine which is dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings. Surrounded by over 100,000 trees, Meiji is an oasis of serenity and spirituality in a city that never sleeps. We will then visit the Nezu Museum which exhibits an excellent collection of Japanese and East Asian art. Hidden away in its spacious forest-like garden you will find ponds, stone lanterns and several tea houses. After lunch we will start our journey to Hakone where we hope to get a glimpse of Mount Fuji. Enjoy some free time after checking into our hotel, the Hakone Konwakien Ten-yu, before meeting for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)



Shirakawago village



Kenroku-en Garden



Sensoji Temple

Day 5 Hakone. Our morning tour will start at the Hakone Shrine. This Shinto shrine was very popular among Samurai during the twelfth century and is hidden away in a dense forest. In fact, the shrine is so well hidden that it would be easy to miss were it not for its magnificent torii gates. After our visit we will board boats to cross Lake Ashi, an enormous volcanic crater created by an eruption over 3000 years ago. In Togendai we will take the cable car towards Owakudani, located on an active volcano and where we can join a series of walks to the steam vents and bubbling pools. Return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure and perhaps, if the colours have arrived, visit the nearby Sekirakuen Gardens or Goya Park independently. Meet this evening for dinner in the hotel. **(B, D)**

Day 6 Hakone & Takayama. After breakfast in the hotel we will check out and make our way to Odawara station where we board a Shinkansen bullet train to Nagoya. From Nagoya we change to a Limited Express Hida Wideview train for one of the most scenic train journeys in Japan, winding our way through tall mountains and stunning gorges to Takayama. A lunch box will be provided on the train as we watch the colours outside the windows. On arrival check into Hotel Associa Takayama Resort and enjoy some free time before meeting for dinner tonight. **(B, L, D)**

Day 7 Takayama. Drive this morning to Takayama Jinya, also known as the Historical Government House which is the only surviving government office building from the Edo period. Takayama Jinya now serves as a museum where you will find well-preserved conference and interrogation rooms with old tatami floors and some century-old artefacts. After lunch at the hotel we will visit Shiroyama Park, a wooded hill that overlooks the town. We will see the statue dedicated to Kanamori Nagachika as well as the Shorenji Temple. There will be the option to take a more strenuous walk into the forest or simply enjoy the autumn colours. End the day at the Higashiyama Temple Area, a peaceful group of temples on a slightly elevated hill area in the eastern part of town. The walk around the temples is a pleasant stroll that will allow the chance to enjoy both the historical sites and the beautiful nature that surrounds them. **(B, L)**

Day 8 Shirakawago & Kanazawa. On our way to Kanazawa we will visit the village of Shirakawago located in the mountains of the Shogawa River Valley that stretch from Gifu all the way to Toyama prefecture. It is famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old and were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. We will enjoy

lunch here before continuing to Kanazawa. After checking into Hotel Nikko we have a free afternoon and evening. Tonight, if conditions permit, you may wish to visit the Kenroku-en Garden which are floodlit from mid-November each year. The red and yellow branches and leaves together with yukitsuri ropes, installed to protect the trees from the snow in winter, lit up in the dark create a fantastic atmosphere. **(B, L)**

Day 9 Kanazawa. Our first stop today is the Omicho Market which has been in the centre of Kanazawa for nearly 300 years. The market is home to more than 200 stalls selling all sorts of fresh produce and, as Kanazawa is located on the coast, you may wish to sample some of the fresh local seafood. After lunch we will continue to Kenroku-en Garden which is classified as one of Japan's three most beautiful gardens. The blooming times were carefully considered during its creation meaning the garden remains interesting all year round, especially in autumn as the maple trees change colour. Kenroku-en literally translates to "Garden of the six sublilities". According to ancient east-Asian landscape theory, the garden possesses all six essential attributes that make a perfect garden. Our day ends at the Nagamachi district where we will visit the Nomura Samurai

House, a traditional Japanese home with tea-ceremony room, an interior courtyard garden and artefacts from the Edo period. After some free time we will meet for dinner in the hotel. **(B, L, D)**

Day 10 Kanazawa to Kyoto. Transfer to the train station after breakfast for our journey to Kyoto. A lunchbox will be provided on the train before we arrive in the early afternoon. On arrival we make our way to Nijo Castle which was built by the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate as the Kyoto residence of the Shogun and is surrounded by stunning gardens. The ornamental building was completed in 1603 and is well-known for its Momoyama architecture, decorated sliding doors, and 'chirping' nightingale floors. Continue to the Philosopher's Path which is a pleasant stone path through the northern part of Kyoto's Higashiyama district. The path gets its name due to Nishida Kitaro, one of Japan's most famous philosophers, who was said to practice meditation while walking this route on his daily commute to Kyoto University. There are many small temples and shrines to stop off at along the walk. Continue to the Kyoto Tokyu Hotel for check in and some free time before dinner is served in the hotel this evening. **(B, L, D)**



Day 11 Kyoto. We have a full day to discover Kyoto. Our first call will be Kinkakuji, also known as the Golden Pavilion, which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun. After the death of Shogun Yoshimitsu it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, with its top two floors completely covered in gold leaf. Continue to the Ryoanji Zen temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site widely known for its rock garden. The garden is considered one of the finest surviving examples of *kare-sensui* (dry-landscape), where larger rock formations are arranged amidst a sea of pebbles that are raked into linear patterns to aid meditation. After lunch we will visit Tenryuji Temple. Ranked among Kyoto's five great Zen temples, Tenryuji is the largest and most impressive temple in Arashiyama. Founded in 1339 at the start of the Muromachi Period, the temple is now considered important cultural property and ranked by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. In addition to its temple buildings, there are beautiful gardens with walking paths. On the way to Nonomiya Shrine the path will lead us through Arashiyama's famous bamboo groves, which are unlike any other place in Japan.

Nonomiya Shrine is a Shinto shrine where in ancient times, unmarried imperial princesses stayed for a year or more to purify themselves and is referenced in numerous works of literature, most notably in the world's first novel: *The Tale of Genji*. (B, L)

Day 12 Nara. After breakfast in the hotel we will drive to nearby Nara. During the eighth century Nara was Japan's capital for 74 years and many of the temples and shrines built at that time still stand today. Visit Todaiji temple, one of the world's largest wooden structures and home to Japan's largest Buddha. The park surrounding the temple is called Nara Park, but is referred to by many as "Deer Park" due to the large population of more than one thousand tame deer who freely roam the streets and will bow their heads in exchange for a treat. Next stop is Nara's most celebrated shrine, Kasuga Taisha. Established in 768 AD the shrine is dedicated to the deity tasked with the protection of the city and is famous for its hundreds of bronze and stone lanterns which have been donated by worshippers over the years. After lunch we return to Kyoto and the Fushimi Inari Shrine. Featured in the movie "Memoirs

of a Geisha", this shrine is known for its thousands of red torii gates leading up and through the sacred forest of Mount Inari. (B, L)

Day 13 Kyoto. This morning is free for independent exploration. In the late afternoon we will partake in a tea ceremony at a small temple. The Tea Master will give a full explanation of Japanese tea as well as the tea ceremony itself, its long history and relationship with

Zen Buddhism. The Master will also tell you the meaning behind each movement involved in the making and serving of the tea, as well as the equipment involved. After some time in Gion, the Geisha district, we will enjoy a traditional Maiko dinner at a local restaurant. (B, D)

Day 14 Osaka to London. Transfer this morning to Osaka for our scheduled flight to London. Arrive this afternoon. (B)

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin **£7195**

Single **£8995**

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights hotel accommodation as described • Meals as indicated inclusive of drinks with lunch & dinner (B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner) • Excursions • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visa.

Group Size: We are limiting the group size to a maximum of 24 participants.

Please note: The autumn colours are a natural phenomena and sightings are not guaranteed. We have timed our journey to meet the traditional times for the changing colours in Hakone, Takayama, Kanazawa and Kyoto however it may be too early to see the colours in Tokyo.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION



KEIO PLAZA HOTEL, TOKYO - TWO NIGHTS

Located just a five minute walk from Shinjuku Station in the heart of Tokyo's shopping and entertainment district, the Keio Plaza is ideally situated to explore this bustling metropolis. Each room offers wonderful views of the city and includes Wi-Fi, L'Occitane toiletries and complimentary bottles of water. Facilities include an outdoor pool and fitness room whilst meals can be enjoyed in one of the twelve on-site restaurants. Choose to enjoy Japanese meals of tempura, sushi and teppan-yaki or alternatively try Chinese, Korean, French or Italian cuisine. Enjoy afternoon tea in the Art Lounge and maybe end the day with a drink at the Aurora Sky Lounge on the 45th floor with panoramic views of the city.

HAKONE KONWAKIEN TEN-YU, HAKONE - TWO NIGHTS

Opened in April 2017, Hakone Kowakien offers Japanese-style rooms with tatami flooring and western style beds. The property boasts views of Tonomine, Myojogatake and Mount Asama. All rooms have air-conditioning, a flat-screen TV, minibar, refrigerator, electric kettle, Wi-Fi, bath amenities and a hairdryer. Guests can enjoy a lounge, shops, on-site gardens and terrace as well as a swimming pool, spa lounge and sauna. There is also an open air "infinity hot spring" to relax and soak in the views. There is an on-site bar and lounge, the perfect place for afternoon tea or an after dinner drink and a selection of Japanese-style restaurants to choose from. Guests will have a choice of Japanese or Western breakfast.



HOTEL ASSOCIA TAKAYAMA RESORT, TAKAYAMA - TWO NIGHTS

Located in the Japanese Alps, Hotel Associa Takayama Resort offers rooms with spectacular mountain views and the facilities include a sauna, massage rooms and tennis courts. Guests can unwind in indoor and outdoor hot spring baths with spectacular nature views or maybe enjoy a treatment at Spa Phytan. The cosy bedrooms overlook the Japanese Alps and are fitted with a flat-screen TV with satellite channels, a minibar, free tea/coffee and complimentary Wi-Fi. Japanese and western style breakfast is served in the restaurant Rosiere overlooking the Northern Alps. There are four restaurants offering Japanese specialities and French cuisine is served at Rosiere. Drinks can be enjoyed at Cafe Scenery and Bar Estmare.

Tokyo skyline



HOTEL NIKKO, KANAZAWA - TWO NIGHTS

Featuring panoramic views, eight dining options and shops, Nikko Kanazawa is conveniently located right in front of JR Kanazawa Train Station in the city centre. All rooms are located above the 17th floor, offering beautiful views of the city. The spacious air-conditioned rooms include Wi-Fi, a flat-screen TV, toiletries, hairdryer, tea and coffee making facilities and a safe. Each morning there is a choice of Japanese or Western buffet breakfast. La Plage restaurant offers French cuisine with fantastic views from the 30th floor and Benkei serves sushi beside a Japanese garden. There is also a Chinese restaurant and a bar on-site.

KYOTO TOKYU HOTEL, KYOTO - FOUR NIGHTS

Situated a short drive from the central railway station, Kyoto Tokyu Hotel is conveniently located to explore the city. The modern rooms have Tempur comfort pillows and a satellite LCD TV whilst Wi-Fi is available throughout the property. All rooms are air-conditioned and include a fridge, safe, hairdryer and tea and coffee making facilities. Guests can make use of the gym or simply relax and enjoy drinks at The Terrace in the waterfall courtyard. Open for all meals, the newly renovated all day dining Kazahana serves Western and Japanese dishes. Tankuma Kitamise features local Kyoto cuisine while Chinese cuisine is available at Star Hill.



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