Best of Japan (BOJA)

10 Night Private Tour

Immerse yourself in the heart of Japan on a 10 night private journey celebrating culture, community, and tradition. From the bustling streets of Tokyo to the tranquil temples of Kyoto, discover a country where history, craftsmanship, and daily life come vividly to life.

Meet community elders and local artisans, craft incense with Buddhist practitioners, and explore villages where centuries-old traditions are still alive. Travel on the Shinkansen through scenic landscapes, savour Kanazawa's exquisite gold leaf delicacies, and take part in a traditional tea ceremony. Experience Japan not just as a visitor, but as a welcomed guest, leaving with memories and stories that linger long after your journey ends.

Highlights:

- Meet a Tokyo elder and dine at a local izakaya.
- Explore temples, markets, and incense traditions in historic Tokyo.
- Cruise Lake Ashi and see Mt. Fuji from Hakone.
- Ride the Shinkansen and discover Kanazawa's gold leaf heritage.
- Wander Shirakawa-go's traditional thatched-roof village.
- Visit Kyoto's iconic shrines, temples, and geisha district.
- Take part in a tea ceremony in a Kyoto townhouse.
- Reflect at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum.

What's included:

- Getting there: Return flights to Tokyo Haneda
- Transport: Private airport transfers, private ground transportation, taxis and Shinkansen bullet train travel
- Accommodation: 10 nights total duration (including 1 night on outbound flight) – 9 nights in hotels: 3 nights Tokyo, 2 nights Kanazawa, 2 nights Kyoto, 1 night Hiroshima, 1 night Tokyo
- Meals included: 9 breakfasts, 1 dinner

Not Included

- Any meals (other than the one mentioned in the itinerary), drinks, tips, expenses of personal nature.
- Early/late check-in/out service at hotels (surcharge if requested)
- Optional excursion/tours
- Travel insurance

Full Itinerary

Day 1: Overnight flight to Tokyo

Board your overnight flight from the UK to Tokyo Haneda Airport HND.

Day 2: Welcome to Japan

Upon arrival in Tokyo, you'll be greeted by a local representative and transferred by private vehicle to your hotel. After checking in, take some time to relax or explore the nearby area at your own pace - perhaps explore a nearby garden, pop into a konbini (convenience store), or simply enjoy a quiet coffee as you take in the city's energy.

This evening, enjoy a short walk to a welcoming local izakaya, where you'll be treated to a traditional Japanese dinner in a relaxed, social setting. Here, you'll be joined by a respected community elder, who will share captivating personal stories of Tokyo's evolution from the aftermath of World War II to the dazzling metropolis it is today. It's a rare opportunity to gain a first-hand perspective on the resilience, creativity, and transformation of modern Japan, all over a delicious welcome meal in an intimate setting.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Asakusa Tobu Hotel, Tokyo or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Dinner

Day 3: Exploring Tokyo's Heritage

Today, set out with your guide to explore some of Tokyo's most iconic and spiritually significant sites. Begin at the majestic Sensoji Temple - the city's oldest temple, rich with atmosphere and centuries of devotion. Wander along Nakamise-dori, a bustling street lined with traditional market stalls selling souvenirs, snacks, and artisan crafts, echoing the vibrant merchant culture of old Edo.

Pause at the jokoro, the large incense cauldron at Sensoji's entrance. Join locals in the gentle ritual of wafting incense smoke over your body - a shared act believed to bring health, protection, and purification.

Later, take part in a hands-on incense-making workshop at a community-run Buddhist centre. Under the guidance of local residents, you'll learn the traditional techniques and meanings behind the practice.

From there, enjoy a walk through the tranquil Imperial Palace Gardens, a peaceful green space surrounded by historic moats and stone walls. Then head to the Ginza Culture Hall, where you'll participate in a Japanese tea tasting, exploring the nuanced flavours and rituals associated with one of the country's most iconic beverages. The rest of the evening is yours to dine at your leisure - Tokyo offers everything from Michelin-starred experiences to tiny, unforgettable ramen shops.

Please note: the Imperial Palace East Gardens are closed to visitors on Mondays and Fridays (and from 28 December to 3 January). On these days, guests can still visit the Kokyo Gaien Outer Plaza and enjoy views of the palace grounds, moats and the famous Nijūbashi Bridge, which remain accessible year-round.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Asakusa Tobu Hotel, Tokyo or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 4: Day Trip to Hakone and Mt. Fuji

Today, escape the city for a breath of fresh mountain air on a private day trip to Hakone National Park, a region renowned for its natural beauty and views of Mount Fuji. Travel by private vehicle through picturesque countryside and ascend via the Hakone Ropeway, a scenic cable car ride that offers dramatic views of steaming vents and volcanic terrain in the Owakudani Valley - a geologically active site steeped in legend.

Weather permitting, you'll enjoy a serene cruise across Lake Ashi, a crater lake formed by past eruptions and framed by forested mountains. The lake's mirrored surface often reflects Mt. Fuji on clear days - a truly iconic image of Japan.

You'll also visit a traditional onsen town, famous for its therapeutic hot springs and artisan traditions. Meet a skilled craftsman specialising in Yosegi-zaiku, a form of intricate wooden marquetry unique to the region. Try your hand at assembling a piece yourself - a delicate and satisfying craft that reveals the patience and precision of Japanese artistry. Return to Tokyo in the evening, with the night free to explore or relax at your hotel.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Asakusa Tobu Hotel, Tokyo or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 5: Travel to Kanazawa by Bullet Train

After a leisurely breakfast, take a private taxi to Tokyo Station, where you'll board the world-famous Shinkansen (bullet train) to Kanazawa. Travelling at speeds of up to 320 km/h, the Shinkansen is a smooth, efficient, and elegant way to journey across Japan. Please note you will not have a guide on board the train with you.

Embrace the unique culture of rail travel in Japan – from the precision timing and whisper-quiet ride to the opportunity to enjoy a beautifully crafted bento box lunch as the countryside rushes past your window. The journey itself is an experience to be savoured.

Upon arrival in Kanazawa, a short walk or taxi takes you to your hotel. The evening is yours to explore at your own pace – perhaps discover a cosy izakaya, sample regional seafood, or take a twilight stroll through the city's historic districts.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hotel Intergate Kanazawa or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 6: Cultural Kanazawa

Begin your day with a guided visit to Kanazawa Castle, a beautifully reconstructed symbol of feudal Japan. Stroll through the exquisite Kenrokuen Garden, celebrated as one of Japan's top three gardens, where every path, pond, and pine has been meticulously designed for harmony and seasonal beauty.

Kanazawa is famed for its gold leaf production, and today you'll explore this luminous craft up close. Learn how artisans painstakingly beat gold into whisper-thin sheets used in everything from temple décor to lacquerware and even food. Discover how gold leaf appears in surprising places - adorning local sweets, floating in sake, or sparkling atop a scoop of matcha ice cream.

Continue your exploration with a visit to the atmospheric Higashi-Chaya District, a beautifully preserved geisha district lined with wooden teahouses and artisan shops. Here, you'll have the chance to try your hand at gold-leaf application, guided by a master craftsperson. The experience offers insight not just into the art, but into the deep cultural pride Kanazawa holds for its heritage.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hotel Intergate Kanazawa or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 7: Kanazawa to Kyoto via Shirakawa-go

Depart Kanazawa with your guide and travel by road into the mountains to visit the UNESCO World Heritage village of Shirakawa-go. Nestled in a remote valley, this charming village is home to the distinctive Gassho-zukuri farmhouses - their steep thatched roofs resembling hands pressed in prayer.

These remarkable structures were designed to withstand heavy snowfall and provide ample attic space for raising silkworms, once a vital part of the local economy. Step inside a preserved farmhouse to discover how rural families lived and worked together, and learn about the enduring community effort required to maintain the thick thatched roofs, a tradition that continues today.

Following your visit, continue the scenic drive to Kyoto, the cultural heart of Japan. Arrive in the late afternoon and enjoy the evening at your leisure, whether you choose to relax or begin discovering the city's refined culinary traditions.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 8: Temples and Traditions of Kyoto

Explore Kyoto's spiritual and architectural wonders with your guide, beginning at the breathtaking Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion). This Zen temple, covered entirely in gold leaf, reflects serenely over its tranquil pond and is one of Japan's most photographed landmarks.

Continue to Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its seemingly endless tunnels of vermillion torii gates that lead into the wooded hills of southern Kyoto. Walk part of the path and take in the spiritual atmosphere of this centuries-old site dedicated to the Shinto god of rice and prosperity.

Later, enjoy a guided walk through Gion, Kyoto's historic geisha district. With its narrow lanes, wooden facades, and hidden teahouses, Gion offers a glimpse into a refined world of elegance and tradition.

Step inside a traditional machiya townhouse to participate in a community-led tea ceremony. In this serene setting, you'll be introduced to the rituals of chanoyu, the Japanese way of tea. Discover the meaning behind small gestures – such as turning the tea bowl to show respect – and the meditative philosophy that underpins this timeless practice. The evening is yours to explore Kyoto's rich dining scene, from humble noodle bars to refined kaiseki cuisine.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast

Day 9: Travel to Hiroshima

Enjoy a relaxed morning in Kyoto with time for some last-minute exploration or souvenir shopping. Perhaps visit a nearby temple, browse a craft market, or simply enjoy a peaceful walk by the river. A private taxi will be arranged to take you to the station for your Shinkansen journey to Hiroshima; please note you will not have a guide with you onboard the train.

The journey south offers scenic views and a chance to unwind. On arrival, check in to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the day at your own pace. Hiroshima's compact centre makes it easy to discover excellent dining options, many specialising in local okonomiyaki, a savoury pancake loved across the region.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* HOTEL MYSTAYS Hiroshima Peace Park or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 10: Remembering Hiroshima and Return to Tokyo

Meet your guide for a powerful and thought-provoking visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum, located at the epicentre of the atomic bombing. Walk through the park's solemn monuments, including the Children's Peace Monument and the A-Bomb Dome, preserved as a symbol of hope and resilience.

Inside the museum, learn about the events of 6 August 1945 through personal artefacts, testimonies, and multimedia exhibits that aim to promote peace and understanding for future generations.

Afterwards, make your way to Hiroshima Station for your return journey to Tokyo by bullet train; please note you will not have a guide on the train with you. The evening is free to enjoy one final night in Japan's dazzling capital.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Asakusa Tobu Hotel, Tokyo or similar
MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

Day 11: Departure from Tokyo

Enjoy a final morning at your leisure in Tokyo. Whether you choose to take a last walk through a nearby garden, shop for souvenirs, or relax with a final cup of matcha, this is your time to reflect on the rich experiences of your journey.

A private transfer to Haneda Airport will be arranged for your return flight to the UK, bringing your unforgettable adventure in Japan to a close.

MEALS INCLUDED: Breakfast.

FAQs

DO I NEED A VISA?
UK passport holders can get a visa on arrival in Japan for tourism up to 90 days.
Passports must be valid for the length of stay, with no additional period of validity required. Please refer to the FCDO website for more information.

DO I NEED ANY VACCINATIONS?
There are no mandatory vaccinations required to enter Japan. However, we recommend consulting your GP or a travel health clinic before you travel to ensure your routine vaccinations are up to date and to receive any personalised health advice.

WHAT CURRENCY SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?
The official currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen. Japan is a predominantly cash-based society, so we recommend exchanging some currency before leaving the UK for convenience. Cash machines are readily available in all major cities, allowing you to withdraw money in the local currency if needed.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TRAVEL TO JAPAN?
The best time to travel to Japan is during spring (March to May) or autumn (September to November), when the weather is mild and the landscapes are at their most beautiful. In spring, you'll enjoy the iconic cherry blossoms, while autumn brings vibrant foliage and crisp, comfortable days—ideal for sightseeing. Both seasons offer a balance of pleasant temperatures, cultural festivals, and fewer extremes in weather.

WILL I BE ON MY OWN AT ANY POINT DURING THE TOUR?
Yes, for part of the journey you'll travel by bullet train independently and make your own way to the hotel in Kanazawa and Hiroshima. If it's more than a short walk, a private taxi will be arranged to meet you. Clear instructions and local support details will be provided to make everything simple and stress-free.