

# JAPAN 2.0

May 7-20, 2021



## VentureOut

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**ITINERARY NOTE:** This program is subject to change. While the broad stroke of the itinerary will not be altered, we reserve the right to revise some of the specific sights visited at each destination.

**Day 1, May 7, 2021 - Friday — Arrival**

With your own air arrangements you'll arrive at one of the Tokyo airports (Narita or Haneda) and then make your way to our group hotel in the city center near Tokyo Station. There are numerous options for getting into the city – with a *very* wide range of costs for these services – so we have not included the cost of a private transfer in the tour price. Please see “Arrival & Departure Logistics” toward the



end of this document for information regarding transfer options and costs.

We'll come together in the early evening and enjoy a welcome drink, get to know our fellow travelers, and have a trip briefing before heading out for our welcome dinner.

*Welcome Drink, Dinner included  
Overnight in Tokyo*

→ *Note:* If you would like us to arrange any pre-tour nights at the group hotel in Tokyo, please let us know. We will not be visiting any sights in Tokyo itself, so you may want some extra days here. Additionally, it would be helpful to arrive a day or two beforehand to shake off jet lag and/or to add a buffer in case of any travel hiccups.

**Day 2 — Hakone**

We jump on a “bullet train” for the quick ride to Hakone (about 30 minutes) where we'll meet a private bus that will take us around the Hakone area for the day. This hot springs resort area is a good place for a view of Mt. Fuji (assuming the clouds cooperate).

The day is spent visiting the Hakone Open-Air Museum (with a fine collection of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western and Japanese sculpture); a short cruise on Lake Ashi; riding a gondola to take in the mountain views. Historically, Hakone was an important checkpoint on the route between imperial Kyoto and the shogun in Edo (now Tokyo).

Return to Tokyo by bullet train.

Dinner this evening is open, and there's no shortage of good restaurants in Tokyo to choose from!

*Breakfast, Lunch included  
Overnight in Tokyo*

### **Days 3-4 — Kanazawa**

Again we board a bullet train, this time to the city of Kanazawa (approximately 2½ hours) over on the Sea of Japan side of the country.

→ **Note:** There is scarcely any space on Japanese trains (even the bullet trains) for large suitcases. This is why luggage delivery services are so common here. We will do as the Japanese and have our main luggage forwarded to Osaka, where we'll be reunited with it two days later. This means you have to prepare a small bag to take with you to Kanazawa for two nights. This bag should be light enough to place above your seat in the overhead luggage rack.

Kanazawa represents the union of Old Japan with a modern trendsetting city. We'll stroll the former samurai quarter with its picturesque canals and 300-year-old buildings as well as the wooden facades of the former geisha district with its lovely old homes and present-day shops. We also spend time in what is considered one of Japan's best gardens: Kenroku-en. This historic garden covers some 25 acres. The translation of the name means "Garden of Six Qualities," those being spaciousness, artistic merit, majesty, abundant water, extensive views, and seclusion. (The last quality is questionable nowadays.)



Renowned for traditional crafts such as gold leaf, dyed silk, lacquerware, and pottery, Kanazawa can also boast the impressive 21st-Century Museum of Contemporary Art.

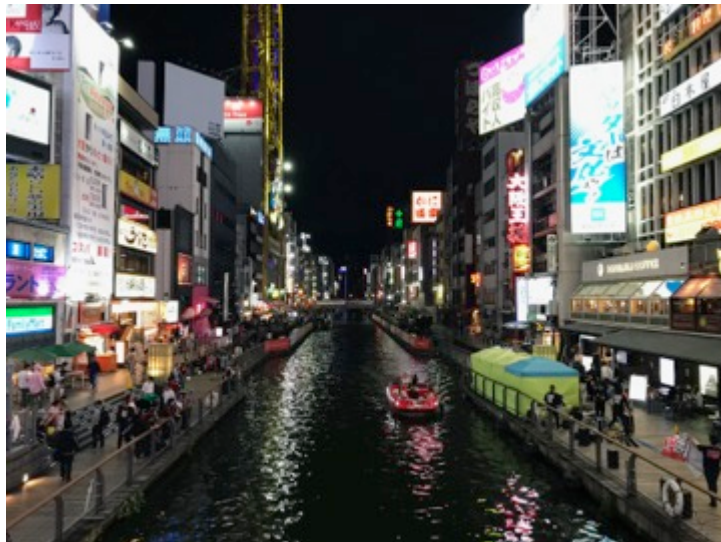
*Day 3 - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Day 4 - Breakfast, Lunch  
Overnights in Kanazawa*

### **Days 5-6 — Kyoto / Osaka**

We board a train bound for Kyoto (no bullet train on this route) with travel time around 2¼ hours. A bus will meet us for a transfer to lunch, which will be

followed by a visit to the Byodo-in temple — one of the loveliest Buddhist structures in Japan and an 11th-century UNESCO World Heritage site whose image graces the ¥10 coin. The landscaped garden and pond reflect the paradise of the Amida Buddha whose large statue sits in the temple, viewing those below him.

From Kyoto we continue to vivacious Osaka with its friendly inhabitants and which has been known as Japan's Kitchen since the 17th century. After settling in at the hotel for a bit we'll reconvene and stroll the nearby Dotomburi quarter – the heart of Osaka's nightlife in all its blazing neon glory and a culinary treasure trove. After enjoying our Osaka dinner we'll amble back to the hotel — or you may wish to extend your evening at one of the many bars in the district.



The next day we spend entirely in Osaka to get a feel for this “friendly competitor” to Tokyo.

We begin at the Osaka Museum of Housing and Living — a life-sized reproduction of an 1830s Osaka neighborhood with shophouses, drugstores, an old-style public bath. From there we walk along Tenjinbashi-suji. This is the longest shopping street in Japan, a covered arcade stretching more than a mile with very much a neighborhood atmosphere. This leads us to Purara Tenma, a bustling non-touristy local market (wholesale and retail) featuring vendors with fresh produce, local gourmet specialties, and street food.

Shitennoji is also on our program. One of the most important historic sights in Osaka this is the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, founded in 593 AD (though what stands today isn't original). There's also a pretty garden here.

After lunch we go up — up to the highest point in Osaka and the tallest building in Japan — to take in the stunning 360° panorama over the entire Kansai region.

We pass through Shinsekai (literally “new World”), a neighborhood built in 1912 to emulate New York and Paris. After falling into neglect after the second world war the area has cleaned up its act and has a cool retro feel to it.

Our last stop is Doguyasuji — an arcade that will appeal if you have even the tiniest interest in kitchen tasks with its mind-boggling array of kitchen tools and crockery. It makes for a fun stroll.

After this very full day you're free to have dinner on your own, with an abundance of choices all around!

*Day 5 - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Day 6 - Breakfast, Lunch*

*Overnights in Osaka*

### **Days 7-9 — Himeji / Bizen / Kurashiki / Naoshima Island**

Departing Osaka this morning our private bus will take us to Himeji Castle (90 minutes) as we move westward in our itinerary. Also known as White Egret Castle this is one of the universally beloved castles in Japan. One of the few original castles still extant in Japan it was built in 1333 as a fortress, was altered at the beginning of the 1600s, and has remained the same since. It appeared in Kurosawa's movie *Ran*.

We then continue (60 minutes) to a small town famous for its traditional pottery in the Bizen area, renowned for its ceramics since the Kamakura period (1185-1333). "Bizen-yaki" is one of the most famous Japanese traditional potteries. We're fortunate to drop in at a small family-run studio where one of the artists will explain Bizen pottery to us and show us the kilns. Their shop is filled with beautiful pieces.



Our last stretch of road (another hour) brings us to our hotel in Okayama, where we stay for three nights.

The next day we spend in Kurashiki (40 minute ride), which was a vital shipping port from the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nowadays the historic center of town is charming with its willow-draped canals, old buildings, restaurants, and shops as well as some fine museums. One of those is the Ohara Art Museum, which we'll see. The 1930 Parthenon-style building houses a fine collection of Western art works of some notable masters. There are also wings with Japanese paintings, tapestries, woodblock prints, and pottery. Another stop for us in Kurashiki is the Ohashi House, a beautifully restored residence from 1793, which belonged to one of the city's wealthiest merchant families. There will be free time for strolling and shopping in the town center.

After returning to our Okayama base dinner is on your own this evening.

Day 9 takes us to Naoshima Island (by bus and ferry). This little island in the Seto Inland Sea has successfully placed itself on the contemporary art world map, hosting three major contemporary art museums (all designed by internationally renowned architect Ando Tadao) as well as an installation art project scattered among various structures that had been abandoned when residents left the island for an urban life — and all of this in a lovely natural setting. There are also numerous works of outdoor sculpture dotting the island, including Yayoi Kusama's *Yellow Pumpkin*, which has become a symbol of the island.



*Note:* We will not be able to see all the museums, and the specific program for the day has not been determined at the time of publishing this itinerary.

After a full day on the “art island” we return to our hotel in Okayama.

*Day 7 – Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Day 8 – Breakfast, Lunch*

*Day 9 - Breakfast, Lunch*

*Overnights in Okayama*

### **Days 10-11 — Shimane**

Today we cross over to the Sea of Japan side of the country again to the Shimane region. Our first stop is the Adachi Museum of Art in Yasugi. The garden here is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful in Japan. Adding to its beauty is the backdrop of the hills and forest, seemingly a part of the garden itself. The interior has a large selection of 19th- and 20th-century Japanese masters.

From here we'll make our way to Matsue, the region's main city. Just outside Matsue is our lovely traditional *ryokan* where we stay for two nights. Here we can enjoy soothing hot spring baths, either communal (gender-separated) or privately in your room. Dinners here are *kaiseki* style, meaning a multi-course feast that is not only delicious but visually beautiful as well.

The next day we'll visit Izumo Taisha. The oldest of Japan's Shinto shrines (as old as Japanese recorded history) it has had great cultural significance since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. For a time it was the largest wooden building in the country, but it has been scaled down at each re-building through the centuries. Izumo Taisha is a prominent place of pilgrimage. The Japanese come here to pray for success in courtship and marriage. A pretty site, the shrine is flanked by lush green lawns with forested peaks rising behind it and an alley of ancient pines lining the approach.



Lunch will be in the attractive city of Matsue known, among other things, for its good food. Its situation on Lake Shinji, which empties into a lagoon, which in turn connects to the Sea of Japan, creates a nice network of canals in the city center.

We'll return to our *ryokan* for free time to enjoy the baths and another excellent *kaiseki* dinner.

*Day 10 - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Day 11 - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

*Overnights near Matsue*

### **Days 12-13 — Hiorshima / Miyajima Island**

The final leg of our journey takes us to Hiroshima (about 2½ hours by bus).

While a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum is a serious and sobering experience, many foreigners who come here are surprised at how lively and modern the city is today.

We'll see the excellent Peace Museum — intense to be sure — but most visitors appreciate the time spent here. There are displays of charred fragments of clothing, melted ceramic tiles, lunch boxes, watches, and photographs that tell the story of Hiroshima's destruction by atomic bomb in August 1945.

Around the museum is the Peace Memorial Park where we'll see various monuments. It's both the physical and emotional center of Hiroshima. These include the A-Bomb Dome, the remnants of a building that despite being directly below the bomb blast did not collapse into rubble like the rest of the city. There is also the Flame of Peace, meant to be extinguished only when the world is free of nuclear weapons. The Pond for Peace is a symbolic offering for the victims who were not able to quench their thirst after the detonation and subsequent radioactive fallout. The Children's Peace Monument with display cases of paper cranes is dedicated to all the children who died in the blast or from radiation sickness after. And the Cenotaph contains the names of 260,000 individuals who perished.



Our hotel is located walking distance from the Peace Memorial Park.

On the last full day of our extensive Japan adventure we'll make a day trip from Hiroshima to charming Miyajima Island. The island's majestic *torii* gate gives the illusion that it's floating when the tide is in — one of Japan's iconic scenic images. Nearby this "sea gate" is the elegant Itsukushima Jinja shrine, founded in AD 593, but the present structure dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



The village is a pleasant place to stroll, shop, and have lunch. For those who wish there's a cable car that whisks you to an observatory near the summit of sacred Mt. Misen, from which there's a beautiful view. A 20-30 minute



hike from the observatory to the actual summit will reward you with even better views out over the Seto Inland Sea, its islands, and the mainland.

We'll then return to Hiroshima to enjoy the last of many delicious meals on our trip!

*Day 12 — Breakfast, Lunch*

*Day 13 — Breakfast, Dinner*

#### **Day 14, Thursday, May 20, 2021 — Departure**

You will have captured many wonderful moments in Japan to bring back with you! You're free to depart from Hiroshima at any time. Please refer to the "Arrival & Departure Logistics" further on.

*Sayonara!*

*Breakfast included*

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

On this tour our accommodations will be mostly in large international chain hotels as these hotels provide (1) enough rooms for the group; (2) equality among the rooms themselves; and (3) reasonable space in the rooms by Japanese standards. Among non-chain hotels these criteria are not at all easy to satisfy in the cities where we stay.

Tokyo – 2 nights (with the possibility to add pre-tour nights)

Kanazawa – 2 nights

Osaka – 2 nights

Okayama – 3 nights

Shimane – 2 nights

Hiroshima – 2 nights

The only small, unique accommodation that we will use is in the Shimane region. Here we'll stay in an upscale 24-room traditional Japanese *ryokan*. If you've been on our previous Japan itinerary you know that this type of accommodation has tatami mats in the rooms where they lay out futons on the floor in the evening to sleep on. Additionally, each room has its own outdoor hot tub with thermal spring water, and there are also communal baths (separated by gender). Another prominent feature of the *ryokan* experience is the wonderful *kaiseki* meal in the evening (a multi-course gourmet feast).

→ *Note:*

This particular *ryokan* has no Western-style rooms (i.e., rooms with beds), so that is not an option for these two nights.

## TOUR COST & IMPORTANT TRIP DETAILS

14-15 participants: \$7,795 per person  
12-13 participants: \$7,995 per person  
10-11 participants: \$8,195 per person  
Single Supplement: \$1,395

*About our tier pricing:* There are certain fixed costs involved with operating a trip of this nature regardless of the number of participants who have signed up. With a smaller number of group members, the fixed costs (per person) are higher. In order to cover those fixed costs for a smaller-sized group, we prefer to charge a bit extra in order to ensure that the trip can run rather than have to cancel a trip due to a low number of sign-ups

Costs are based on double occupancy of a room. If you are traveling solo and wish to have your own room throughout the tour then the single supplement will apply. If you are traveling solo and wish to share a room, we will match you with a roommate if one is available. Should there be no one to pair you with, the single supplement fee will apply.



**Currency Exchange Rates:** Our costs to operate this tour are tied directly and entirely to the exchange rate between the Japanese Yen and the U.S. Dollar. Over the past several years the value of the dollar has fluctuated in quite a volatile manner against the Yen. *We reserve the right to alter the trip pricing indicated here should there be a significant fluctuation in the exchange rate from the time this tour is published.* Please read the Terms & Conditions that accompany the Trip Enrollment Form.

### **Tour Cost Includes:**

- 13 nights' high-end accommodations: 11 nights in large internationally known chain hotels and 2 nights at an upscale, traditional Japanese *ryokan*
- Most meals (as indicated in the day-to-day program)
- Glass of sake, wine, beer, or soft drink with group meals
- Sightseeing as noted in the program with entrance fees to sights
- Land transportation using a combination of our own private comfortable coaches, bullet trains, or other trains.
- Local professional tour guide traveling with the group
- Venture Out escort throughout the tour (with a minimum of 10 participants)

### Tour Cost Does Not Include:

- International airfare
- Airport transfers at the beginning and end of the tour (many options are available)
- A few meals (as indicated in the day-to-day program)
- Any extra hotel nights that may be needed or desired before or after the tour
- Expenses of a personal nature (laundry, phone calls, room service, etc.).
- Pre-trip expenses such as travel insurance, passports, etc.

### TRANSPORTATION & TRAVEL TIMES

Mostly we'll use comfortable privately chartered buses to move around. However, as mentioned in the day-to-day program we'll be using trains on Days 2, 3 and 5 as this will save a good bit of time in those areas.

On Days 2 and 3 we'll use the Shinkansen (the so-called "bullet trains"). On Day 5 there's no bullet train on our route; we use a service that's called a "limited express."

As mentioned in the detailed itinerary earlier **there is scarcely any space on Japanese trains (even the bullet trains) for large suitcases.** This is why luggage delivery services are so common here. We will join the Japanese and have our main luggage forwarded from Tokyo to Osaka, where we'll be reunited with it two days later. This means you have to prepare a small bag to take with you to Kanazawa for two nights. This bag should be light enough to lift and place above your seat in the overhead luggage rack.



Here are the approximate travel times involved throughout this itinerary:

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| Day 2 | 30 minutes each way on bullet train, plus local travel in the Hakone area by private bus, boat, and cable car               |
| Day 3 | 2½ hours on bullet train from Tokyo to Kanazawa, plus local city travel by private bus within Kanazawa                      |
| Day 4 | Private bus just within Kanazawa  |
| Day 5 | 2¼ hours on Limited Express train from Kanazawa to Kyoto. Private bus around Kyoto, then continuing to Osaka (about 1 hour) |
| Day 6 | Private bus just within Osaka   |

Day 7	About 3½ hours in total by private bus but broken up with stops
Day 8	About 1½ hours round-trip by private bus
Day 9	About 2 hours round-trip by private bus and ferry
Day 10	About 3 hours in total by private bus with stops along the way
Day 11	About 1¾ hours round-trip by private bus
Day 12	About 2½ hours by private bus
Day 13	About 1½ hours round-trip by ferry

### **ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE LOGISTICS**

Airport codes:

Tokyo Narita = NRT; Tokyo Haneda = HND;

Hiroshima = HIJ

Because of the range of options for getting into Tokyo at the beginning of the tour — and the very wide variation in costs for these services — we have not included a transfer in the tour cost.

Here are some of the options and approximate costs:

#### **From Tokyo Narita Airport to central Tokyo:**

Narita Airport is about 40 miles from the city center.

Trains – About \$30 per person. The Narita Express runs about every 30 minutes and stops at the Tokyo train station, which is a short walk to the hotel. Before boarding the train a specific seat must be reserved when buying the ticket. Travel time is about 60 to 75 minutes.

The Airport Limousine Bus (about \$32 per person) operates a route that stops at the Tokyo train station, which is a short walk to the hotel. Travel time is about 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.

A shared van service that drops at various hotels would cost around \$40 per person with travel time about 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Taxi -- about \$225.

We can also arrange a private “meet & greet” and transfer service. We can provide you with a quotation upon request.

### **From Tokyo Haneda Airport to central Tokyo**

Haneda Airport is about 10 miles from the city center.

The Airport Limousine Bus runs frequently to Tokyo train station, which is a short walk to the hotel, at a cost of about \$14 per person. Travel time is around 1 hour.

A shared van service that drops at various hotels would cost around \$30 per person with travel time about 45 minutes.

A taxi would cost around \$80 with travel time about 30 minutes.

We can also arrange a private “meet & greet” and transfer service. We can provide you with a quotation upon request.

### **From Hiroshima to Hiroshima Airport**

Hiroshima’s airport is about 30 miles from the city center.

Airport Bus – Frequent departures from Hiroshima Bus Center, about \$17 per person. Travel time is about 1 hour. The bus center is about a 10-minute walk from the hotel or a quick taxi ride.

Taxi – about \$140

### **CLIMATE**

The average high temperature in this part of Japan in May ranges from 70 to 75 F, and the average low is from 55 to 60 F. The month of May receives about 5 inches of rain, so do expect some during your visit.

### **AND FINALLY . . .**

While as accurate as possible at the time of publishing, this itinerary should be considered a close indication of the schedule and scope of activities, trip routing, and meals, rather than an inflexible schedule of events. It is subject to change. We also reserve the right to maintain flexibility in order to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the Terms and Conditions as detailed in the Trip Enrollment Form.

To realize the maximum enjoyment from your Venture Out trip, we encourage participants to have flexibility, a sense of humor, curiosity and enthusiasm about new people and places, and an openness to the unexpected. With a spirit of adventure and positive attitude, we’re sure you will have a very special travel experience. If you are uncertain about the level of comfort, difficulty, or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please email us or call Venture Out at 1-415-626-5678 to discuss your concerns.

California Seller of Travel #2036134-4