

# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS JAPAN 2017

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# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS

## JAPAN 2017

### YOKOSO—WELCOME

The 2016 cherry blossom season hit its peak in Kyoto and Tokyo at the end of March and beginning of April putting on some great displays. Elsewhere around the country our tours encountered the blossom front at various stages, often providing a mix of early and late blooming trees across almost two months.

For the 2017 cherry blossom season in Japan we have designed three tours covering beginning and ending in Tokyo in each case. The first tour commences March 19th with April dates of 2nd and 16th running through to the end of April.

The April 2nd to 15th is the core blossom chasing tour. The early and late tours are designed cover other parts of the country with opportunity to catch some blossom, but also enjoy the other aspects of Japan.

The attached schedules indicate the dates for cherry blossom viewing in each location. These dates are based on the flowering times from the last ten years and are a guide only. The actual dates are out of our control.

However, there are a couple of things that make chasing the blossom a little easier. Firstly, the early part of the season is when plum trees flower, providing an alternative offering of spectacular colours.

Secondly, the cherry blossom forecast refers specifically to the five petal bloom type, and there are many different types of cherry that flower earlier and later, extending the season.



### CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 2 APRIL TO 15 APRIL

The peak period for cherry blossom viewing starts in Tokyo at the beginning of April, including some of the famous and popular viewing locations around the city before heading south to Hiroshima and the island Miyajima with its floating torii gate.

Leaving Hiroshima we head to Kyoto and a selection of its famous sights before heading west to Kanazawa and its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle.

We then head to the mountains for a stay at a traditional Japanese inn and onsen before chasing the cherry blossom in the area around Sendai city, including a cruise around Matsushima Bay. The end of the tour sees us return to Tokyo for the weekend.

### LATE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 16 APRIL TO 30 APRIL

Our late cherry tour includes some additional days in Tokyo that allows for side trips to Sendai (for Matsushima) and also to Nikko (for its famous temples and shrines).

Leaving Tokyo for the mountains we stay near Nagano for onsen and a visit to the snow monkeys before two days in the western city of Kanazawa.

We then we head east back into the mountains to the township of Takayama to before taking the scenic train route to Kyoto for three nights, to take in the unique sights that this city has to offer. From Kyoto, we return to Tokyo.

### BRIEF TOUR SUMMARIES

#### EARLY CHERRY TOUR 19 MARCH TO 1 APRIL

Starting in Tokyo, before heading to the Japanese alps and the onsen town of Togura. After an overnight stop in Kanazawa travel south to Hiroshima and the beautiful Miyajima.

From our most southern point we head back to the old capital of Kyoto, before heading back into the mountains to the picturesque town of Takayama. From here the two weeks is completed with the journey back to Tokyo.

# LOCATIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS

## TOKYO

Take advantage of this metropolis of 37 million people by exploring the sites that interest you. Visit the beautiful gardens, varied museums, and shopping areas.

For an introduction to Japan head to Asakusa and the Sensoji temple with its Kaminarimon (thunder gate), Hozomon and pagoda. Hundreds of stalls line the entrance to this temple providing an array of souvenirs and goods for the many visitors.

Also head to one or more of the famous neighbourhoods of Tokyo: Shibuya and the "scramble" pedestrian crossing, Akihabara, Shinjuku, Harajuku, and Meiji Shrine.

For cherry blossom viewing we recommend Shinjuku National Gardens, Ueno Park, the Imperial Palace East Gardens or along the Meguro river.



## KYOTO

Visit the Inari Fushimi shrine (10,000 tori gates) a good option for sightseeing in the late afternoon. For the energetic, take the time to climb Mt Inari (a couple of hours walking).

Day trip to the world heritage site at Nara to view Todaiji temple with the world's largest bronze Buddha, and enjoy the deer park and monuments of the first capital of Japan.

Cherry blossom viewing in Maruyama Park and Shiwakara Dori (one of the most beautiful streets in the Gion district)

Visit the famous "golden pavilion" Kinkakuji and Nijo Castle and Palace for the landscaped gardens, cherry trees and preserved artworks.

Shopping at the 400-year old covered Nishiki Market, which includes a selection of local foods and stalls. The Isetan and Takashimaya department stores are also excellent for shopping.

## SENDAI

Avoiding the crowded tourist areas, Sendai provides an open and relaxed city environment. While in Sendai cruise Matsushima Bay, one of the top three views in Japan (a designated "special place of scenic beauty").

For cherry blossom we take the local train to Ogawara where more than 1,000 cherry trees. Have been planted along the river banks.

There is also an opportunity to visit the Rinno-ji temple to view its beautiful Japanese garden.



# LOCATION AND HIGHLIGHTS

## HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima is known as the location where an atomic bomb was first used. The city now provides a focus towards peace with an interesting museum and neighbouring peace park.

The city also provides a base to visit the beautiful island of Miyajima and the famous "floating" torii gate, one of the "three views of Japan." The island includes forest walks, views across the Seto inland sea and a ropeway to the top of Mt Misen.

Also near to Hiroshima is the interesting Yamato maritime museum



## NAGANO/TOGURA

Stay at a 100 year old Japanese inn in the small onsen town of Togura, 20 minutes from Nagano. Enjoy the traditional keiseki style meals. During dinner enjoy the dancing and musical entertainment provided by the local geisha.

As an onsen, have a relaxing soak in the ryokan's own hot mineral baths, and sleeping on futons in spacious tatami mat rooms.

Take a day trip to the famous Jigokudani Monkey Park (snow monkeys) including a walk through the cedar forest.



## TAKAYAMA

The mountain town of Takayama provides variety in a small area. Stroll along the river to the morning markets, enjoy the scenery and forest walking course, visit the float museum to see the intricate workmanship on priceless floats several hundred years old that are still in regular use.

From Takayama take in the world heritage site of Shirakawa-go and visit the historic village museum of Hida Mura.

A visit would not be complete without sampling Hida beef—an evening BBQ restaurant is recommended.



## KANAZAWA

Kanazawa is famous for the Kenrokuen gardens, one of the top three gardens in Japan. With a range of plum and cherry trees, plus excellent design it manages to provide beautiful scenes all year around.

Also visit the Kanazawa Castle, grounds and castle garden. Nearby is the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary art as well as a number of other interesting, historic areas such as the Higashi Chaya (geisha teahouse) District.

For fresh sashimi and an interesting fresh fish and produce market, head to Omicho, a good option for a protein breakfast.

## EARLY CHERRY TOUR 19 MARCH TO 1 APRIL

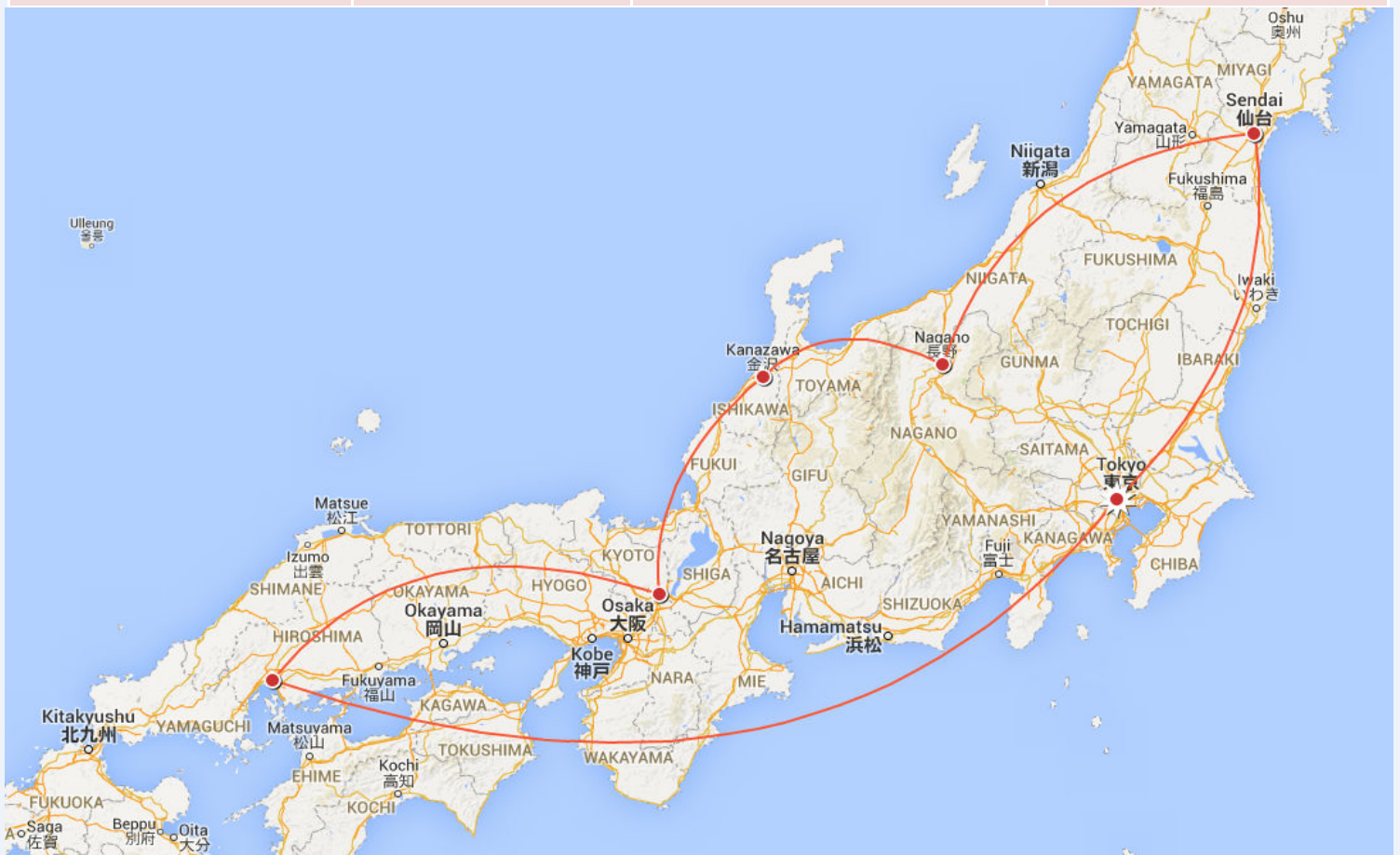
JPY595,000 per person , 15 days, 14 nights

Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First bloom and full Bloom
Sunday 19th March to Monday 20th March	<b>Tokyo</b>	Shibuya, Asukusa temple, Harajuku Meiji shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens	23 March / 31 March
Tuesday 21st March and Wednesday 22nd March	<b>Nagano/Togura</b>	Japanese inn with dining, geisha entertainment and mineral onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park..	10 April / 15 April
Thursday 23rd March	<b>Kanazawa</b>	Famous Kenrokuen gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Friday 24th March and Saturday 25th March	<b>Hiroshima</b>	Miyajima, Mt Misen and the Peace Park	25 March / 4 April
Sunday 26th March to Tuesday 28th March	<b>Kyoto</b>	Fushimi Inari shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo castle Kinkakuji golden pavilion, Heian shine gardens.	25 March / 4 April
Wednesday 29th March to Thursday 30th March	<b>Takayama</b>	The world heritage gassho style houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and old style mountain town.	10 April / 15 April
Friday 31st March to Saturday 1st April	<b>Tokyo</b>	Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing, free time. And the end of the tour	23 March / 31 March

# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 2 APRIL TO 15 APRIL

JPY695,000 per person, 15 days, 14 nights

Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First bloom and full Bloom
Sunday 2nd April and Monday 3rd April	<b>Tokyo</b>	Shibuya, Asukusa temple, Harajuku Meiji shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens	23 March / 31 March
Tuesday 4th April and Wednesday 5th April	<b>Hiroshima</b>	Miyajima, Mt Misen and the Peace Park	25 March / 4 April
Thursday 6th April to Saturday 8th April	<b>Kyoto</b>	Fushimi Inari shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo castle Kinkakuji golden pavilion, Heian shine gardens.	25 March / 4 April
Sunday 9th April	<b>Kanazawa</b>	Famous Kenrokuen gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Monday 10th April and Tuesday 11th April	<b>Nagano/Togura</b>	Japanese inn with dining, geisha entertainment and mineral onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.	10 April / 15 April
Wednesday 12th April and Thursday 13th April	<b>Sendai</b>	Cruise Matsushima Bay—one of the top three views of Japan. Cherry blossom at Ogawara with its 1000 cherry trees.	10 April / 15 April
Friday 14th April and Saturday 15th April	<b>Tokyo</b>	Returning to Tokyo for free time and the end of the tour.	23 March / 31 March



## LATE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 16 APRIL TO 30 APRIL

JPY595,000 per person , 15 days, 14 nights

Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First bloom and full Bloom
Sunday 16th April and Monday 17th April	<b>Tokyo</b>	Shibuya crossing, Asukusa temple, Harajuku Meiji shrine and Yoyogi Park	23 March / 31 March
Tuesday 18th April and Wednesday 19th April	<b>Tokyo day trips</b>	Visit to Sendai and Matsushima bay, and to the temples and shrines of Nikko.	10 April / 15 April
Thursday 20th April and Friday 21st April	<b>Nagano/Togura</b>	Japanese inn with dining, geisha entertainment and mineral onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.	10 April / 15 April
Saturday 22nd April and Sunday 23rd April	<b>Kanazawa</b>	Famous Kenrokuen gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Monday 24th April and Tuesday 25th April	<b>Takayama</b>	The world heritage gassho style houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and old style mountain	10 April / 15 April
Wednesday 26th April to Friday 28th April	<b>Kyoto</b>	Fushimi Inari shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo castle, Kinkakuji golden pavilion, Kodaiji temple and bamboo grove	25 March / 4 April
Saturday 29th April	<b>Tokyo</b>	Return to Tokyo for free time and the end of the tour.	23 March / 31 March

# TOUR INFORMATION

## HOTELS

We select hotels in each city based on experience and previous guest feedback. This includes considerations for location, space and availability. With this in mind we look for 4\* and 5\* accommodation that meets the needs of our guests rather than selecting cheap accommodation.

Our intended options for our cherry blossom tours include:

- ◇ Tokyo: Cerulean Tower
- ◇ Kyoto: Kyoto Century
- ◇ Hiroshima: Sheraton Hiroshima
- ◇ Sendai: Sendai Westin
- ◇ Kanazawa: Holiday Inn Kanazawa Sky



## BOOKING AND DEPOSIT

Bookings are accepted by contacting us directly at

**[Admin@japancustomtours.co.nz](mailto:Admin@japancustomtours.co.nz)**

At the time of booking we request a 25% non-refundable deposit to secure you place, with the balance due one month prior to your departure date.

We price our tours in Japanese yen, but can convert this to your preferred currency. Once your booking is confirmed, your tour price is also fixed so you do not need to worry about currency fluctuations.



## RYOKAN AND ONSEN

Staying at a traditional Japanese inn or ryokan is part of the Japan experience that we like to provide our guests. However, there are two things that might discourage you from trying this style of accommodation:

First, onsen is a shared bath (single sex) without clothes (naked). Second, bedding is on futons on tatami mat floors.

If you think these might prevent you from enjoying your tour, please contact us and we can look at securing a nearby western style hotel for you.



## ARRIVING AND DEPARTING

Each tour starts and finishes in Tokyo. We are happy to arrange accommodation covering dates before the tour starts or after a tour finishes to match your flight arrangements

We expect most guests to arrive during the weekend and we anticipate being able to meet guests at the airport (Narita and Haneda) to assist with an introduction to Japan and navigating the initial transfer to our hotel.

This means that for the days in Tokyo guests will have free time to explore the city and to see those things that most interest them. We can help with suggestions and directions.