



November 2017 Japan Tour - “Best of Japan” garden theme

Itinerary for travel: from 3rd November to 16th November 2017

1. Introduction:

Welcome to our Best of Japan – November garden tour. For this edition of our “Best of” tour we have a garden theme due to early requests in the planning stage, and that is reflected in the schedule. This tour will be led by Wendy Harnett and Koji Arihisa (our bi-lingual team member, originally from Fukuoka).

2. Airport arrivals:

We expect most guests will be arriving into Japan a day or two before the official start of the tour. As part of our planning we make arrangements to meet everyone at the airport (either Haneda or Narita) and transfer you to your hotel in central Tokyo. We can also arrange the additional days accommodation to suit your arrival.

When you arrive, after clearing Immigration, luggage collection and Customs, we will meet you at the exit of the Arrivals Hall. You will recognise us as we will have a welcome sign displaying your name and our company logo. For Narita arrivals we then take the Narita Express (N’Ex) train into the city. For Haneda arrivals we take local trains.

3. Tour itinerary:

Friday 3rd November Tokyo: Wendy Harnett and Koji Arihisa will meet you at the airport (either Haneda or Narita) and transfer you to your hotel in central Tokyo.

Upon arrival, after clearing Immigration, luggage collection and Customs, they will meet you at the exit of the Arrivals Hall. You will recognise us as we will have a welcome sign displaying your name and our company logo. For Narita arrivals we then take the Narita Express (N’Ex) train into the city. For Haneda arrivals we take local trains (which require a single station transfer).

Saturday 4th November Tokyo: Visit Asukusa Kaminarimon (“Thunder gate”), Hozomon and pagoda. An array of stalls lines Nakamise Street (the entrance to this shrine) providing a wide range of souvenirs and snacks on the approach to Sensoji Temple.

In the afternoon, visit Shinjuku and enjoy the view from the Tokyo Metropolitan Building (200 metres above ground level). There is also time to see the expansive Shinjuku National Gardens with its interesting and large green-house.

Sunday 5th November Tokyo: Hakone day trip: Romance Car train from Tokyo to Hakone-Yumoto, bus to Lake Ashi (walk along the cedar avenue to the Hakone checkpoint), boat cruise across the lake to Togendai, ropeway and the Tozan cable car, Tozan train back to Hakone-Yumoto

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for the return trip to Tokyo. Hakone provides many places to view Mt Fuji (on a clear day) including from the lake and the ropeway.

Monday 6th November Tokyo: Day trip to Nikko: Taking the bullet train north and then the local train to visit the famous shrines at Nikko including the lavishly decorated Toshugu shrine and Iemitsu mausoleum.

Tuesday 7th November Tokyo to Kyoto: Leaving Tokyo we take the shinkansen to Kyoto, which delivers us to the historic old capital of Japan around 1 p.m. During the afternoon we usually visit the very accessible Fushimi Inari Shinto shrine with its famous 10,000 torii gates. The walk to the top of Inari Yama (to see all 10,000!) takes a couple of hours and is definitely optional...



Fushimi Inari Shrine (left), Kodaiji Temple Gardens (right)

Wednesday 8th November Kyoto: Visit the "Golden Pavilion" Kinkaku-ji in the north-west of the city and then Nijo Castle (*the palace buildings are one the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan's feudal era*), before heading to Heian Shrine and gardens.

Shopping at the covered Nishiki Market, which includes a selection of local food stalls. The Isetan and Takashimaya department stores are also excellent for shopping and both have vast food halls.

Thursday 9th November Kyoto: Visit the beautiful Arashiyama district for viewing the autumn leaves and enjoy the view across the Oi River and the nearby Sagano bamboo grove. Visit some of the temples and gardens. The nearby Ryoanji Temple is the site of Japan's most famous rock garden.

Optional: Day trip to the world heritage site at Nara. At Nara there is both Todai-ji temple (with the world's largest bronze Buddha), and Kagusa Shinto shrine. *There are sacred deer roaming the park and some excellent souvenir shopping options.*

Friday 10th November Himeji and Okayama day trip: Take the bullet train south to the castle towns of Himeji and Okayama. Korakuen at Okayama is a beautiful landscape garden and is ranked as one of Japan's three best landscape gardens. It is located just beside Okayama Castle. The main building of Okayama Castle is the six story castle keep. The keep's interior is modern and displays exhibits on the history and development of the castle.

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At Himeji, Koko-en is a relatively recently constructed Japanese style garden, which was opened in 1992. Himeji Castle is also known as White Heron Castle due to its elegant, white appearance. It is considered by many to be Japan's most spectacular castle for its imposing size, beauty and its well preserved, complex castle grounds.



Kanazawa Castle Garden (left), Nijo Castle Gardens, Kyoto (right)

Saturday 11th November Kyoto: An additional day for sightseeing or relaxing in the historic capital of Japan.

Sunday 12th November Kyoto to Takayama: Travel by Shinkansen and then local train to the onsen (hot spring) mountain town of Takayama. Explore the town's historic buildings and shops on foot. The local specialty is Hida beef, very good quality – we recommend enjoying it at one of the local bbq restaurants. Accommodation at a Japanese ryokan (inn), complete with onsen (hot springs bath) and private shower in each room.

Monday 13th November Takayama: During the morning explore the town's historic buildings, morning market and shops on foot and/or visit the festival floats exhibition hall. The afternoon is reserved for a ½ day bus tour that visits the World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go with its old traditional “A frame” farmhouses.

Tuesday 14th November Takayama to Kanazawa: Leaving the mountains, complete the journey across the main island of Honshu to Toyama and then catch the shinkansen train to Kanazawa. The afternoon is set aside to visit the famous Kenrokuen Garden and Kanazawa castle and its small (but beautiful) castle garden.

Wednesday 15th November Kanazawa to Tokyo: Omi-cho market is a smaller, friendlier version of the Tokyo Tsujiki fish market and a great location for a fresh sashimi breakfast. Travel by shinkansen to Tokyo which will be our base for the remaining time in Japan.

Thursday 16th November Tokyo: Tokyo: Optional Mito day trip: Taking a limited express train an hour north of Tokyo, visit Mito, the capital of Ibaraki Prefecture. Kairakuen Garden is ranked among Japan's three finest landscape gardens. It is most famous for its over three thousand

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plum trees. Kairakuen also features a bamboo grove, cedar woods and the Kobuntei, a traditional Japanese style building.



Hamariku Garden, Tokyo (left), Greenhouse at Shinjuku National Gardens (right)

Other options for the day include visiting the national gardens at Shinjuku, the Palace East gardens or Hamarikyū Garden that feature seawater ponds that change level with the tides, and a teahouse on an island where visitors can rest and enjoy the scenery (including the Tokyo skyscraper skyline).

Friday 17th November Tokyo: Final time in Tokyo before heading to the airport for your flight home.

4. Transport arrangements:

For travel around Tokyo we use a combination of local trains and the subway. For trains and subways in Tokyo and Kyoto we use pre-paid electronic passes. In some places we use taxis to provide cost-effective point-to-point transportation.

The Japan Rail Pass (JRP) available to tourists visiting Japan covers the extensive Japan Rail network. The rail network is the most efficient and cost-effective method to transfer between the different places we are visiting. We will exchange JRP vouchers (previously obtained by us on your behalf) for the actual rail passes before we leave Tokyo. This exchange process (which we also do on your behalf) requires us to show your passports to prove eligibility (i.e. the temporary visitor visa stamp you receive on entering Japan) for the passes.

5. Hotels *(As availability changes the actual hotels may differ at the time of your booking.)*

Tokyo: Akasaka Excel Tokyo: This large, modern hotel in Akasaka is located opposite the local subway station affording easy access to Tokyo, Asakusa, Shibuya, and Shinjuku. “City view” rooms include opening windows, and with a convenient café and 7/11 downstairs. The local neighbourhood offers a large range of dining options.

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Kyoto: Kyoto Century Hotel: Located next to the Kyoto Railway Station the “Century” provides an excellent base while staying in Kyoto. The breakfast buffet is excellent and we find the rooms suit the majority of our guests due to the layout and comfort.

Kanazawa: Holiday Inn Kanazawa Sky. A short taxi ride from the train station, this comfortable hotel is close to Kanazawa’s main attractions. We have booked a mix of rooms breakfast included. For the adventurous, the Omi-cho market across the street provides fresh sushi as a breakfast option.

Takayama: Depending on availability at your time of booking. Typically one of:

- Honjin Hiranoya Bekkin Annex: A luxury option with views of the river and included meals the Honjin is a relaxing retreat in traditional ryokan style with excellent service. Rooms include private showers and there is an onsen on-site.
- Hida Plaza Hotel: A large western/Japanese hotel with comfortable rooms and a mix of styles.

Lastly, we look forward to meeting you and providing you with a wonderful experience exploring Japan! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.