



# ONSEN ADVENTURES & CULTURAL DESIGNS 11D/10N

This immersive 11-day tour unveils the captivating spirit of Japan. Dive into Tokyo's cutting-edge art scene and iconic landmarks. Bathe in therapeutic hot springs and witness unique cultural traditions in Kusatsu Onsen. Explore sacred shrines and majestic landscapes in Nagano, staying overnight in a temple lodging.

Travel back in time at charming villages and Matsumoto Castle. Hike amidst breathtaking scenery in Kamikochi and unwind in tranquil hot springs of Okuhida Onsen. Immerse yourself in the rich history and sake culture of Takayama. Witness the UNESCO-protected Gassho-zukuri farmhouses of Shirakawago and delve into Kanazawa's vibrant markets and serene gardens.

Experience the best of Japan's cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and rejuvenating experiences on this unforgettable adventure.

## **Highlights**

- Explore Tokyo's cutting-edge art scene at TeamLab Borderless and witness the iconic Shibuya Crossing.
- Immerse yourself in the serene beauty of Karuizawa, visiting the Stone Church and the cascading Shiraito Falls.
- Rejuvenate in the natural hot springs of Kusatsu Onsen, experiencing the Yubatake hot water field, the Yumomi show, and a traditional ryokan stay.
- Hike through the mystical Togakushi forest, visiting ancient shrines and learning about the history of Togakure-ryu ninjutsu.
- Craft your own soba noodles and explore the charming streets of Matsumoto, a historic castle town.
- Find peace and relaxation in the tranquil mountain village of Okuhida Onsen, renowned for its therapeutic hot springs.
- Embrace nature on a hike through Kamikochi, a breathtaking landscape with crystal-clear rivers and majestic mountains.
- Discover the captivating village of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its unique Gassho-zukuri farmhouses.
- Immerse yourself in Kanazawa's rich culture, visiting the lively Oumicho Market, the exquisite Kenrokuen Garden, and the historic Nagamachi samurai district.

This tour offers a perfect blend of cultural immersion, natural wonders, and traditional experiences, allowing you to discover the best of Japan.

## **Inclusions**

- Return Economy class international flights
- Accommodation for 10 Nights at the listed hotels or similar
- Mentioned tours with English speaking guides (D2-D9)
- Accommodations
- Meals mentioned in the itinerary
- Land transfer mentioned in the itinerary
- Kyoto/Karuizawa and Kanazawa/Tokyo bullet train ticket (economy seat)
- Entrance fee to the places indicated in the itinerary



## **Exclusions**

- Services not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional service
- International airline tickets
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses

## **NOTE:**

- If the lunch is not included during the tour, guide will advise you recommendations but will not have lunch with customers.
- In case the customers invite the guide to have lunch with them, the expense of lunch for the guide should be covered by customers as well
- If the tour is extended for the customer's convenience, an additional guide fee will be charged.
- In case the customers wish to use taxi instead of public transport, it should be paid by customers.

## **ITINERARY**

### **Day 1 - Arrive Tokyo**

Arrival in Tokyo

Private car transfer to hotel, you will be met by your driver upon exiting the arrivals area and you have collected your luggage.

Hotel check-in

*Accommodation: Hotel The Celestine or similar*

*Meals Included: -*

### **Day 2 – Tokyo**

Enjoy breakfast at hotel

Today you will start with a half day tour of Tokyo. We will start at Team Labo Planet Toyosu, an interactive digital art museum that offers a unique and immersive experience. You will have the opportunity to explore various interactive exhibits and be mesmerised by the stunning visual displays.

Next, we will head to Shibuya, one of Tokyo's busiest and most iconic districts. Our first stop will be the famous Shibuya Scramble Crossing, known for its bustling pedestrian traffic. You can witness the organized chaos as people cross the intersection from all directions, creating a mesmerising spectacle. Adjacent to the crossing, you will find the Hachiko Statue, a symbol of loyalty and devotion. This bronze statue commemorates the story of Hachiko, a loyal dog who waited for his owner at the Shibuya Station every day, even after his owner's passing. It is a popular meeting spot and a must-visit landmark in Shibuya.

Afterward, we will visit Shibuya Sky, an observation deck located on the top floors of a skyscraper. From here, you can enjoy panoramic views of Tokyo's skyline, including the Shibuya Crossing and surrounding areas. It's a great opportunity to take stunning photos and appreciate the vastness of the city. Return to hotel or continue exploring at your leisure.

*Accommodation: Hotel The Celestine or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*



### **Day 3 – Tokyo - Karuizawa - Kusatsu**

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel.

Transfer by Private car to Tokyo Station, head to Karuizawa by Japanese Shinkansen bullet train

You are collected at Karuizawa Station by private car for sightseeing of the area. Our first stop is the Karuizawa Stone Church, located in the picturesque town of Karuizawa. This stunning church is known for its unique architecture and tranquil surroundings. You can take a leisurely stroll around the church grounds, admire the beautiful stone structure, and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

After visiting the stone church, we will make our way to Shiraito Falls. Located in the Yamanashi Prefecture, Shiraito Falls is a breathtaking waterfall known for its delicate, thin streams of water cascading down a cliff face. The falls are surrounded by lush greenery, creating a serene and picturesque setting. You can take a walk along the designated paths, get up close to the falls, and even taste the pure and refreshing water.

You will then depart for Kusatsu. Kusatsu is a popular destination for its natural hot springs and unique cultural experiences.

Our first stop is Yubatake, the hot water field that is the centrepiece of Kusatsu. Here, you can witness the impressive sight of steaming hot water gushing out from the ground. Learn about the geothermal activity that powers these hot springs and the significance of Yubatake in Kusatsu's history.

Next, we will attend the Yumomi show, a traditional method of adjusting the temperature of the hot spring source. During this performance, local women use large wooden paddles to stir and cool down the hot spring water, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. You will have the opportunity to learn about this unique technique and even participate in the process.

Afterwards, we will visit Nishino-kawara Park, a picturesque riverbed where hot springs flow through. Take a leisurely stroll along the river and enjoy the soothing sounds of the flowing water. This serene setting offers a peaceful escape and a chance to immerse yourself in the healing properties of the hot springs.

You will then be transferred to your Ryokan (Japanese hot spring inn) for the evening, enjoy a hot spring bath of Kusatsu Onsen and a Japanese-style kaiseki dinner.

*Accommodation: Yuyado Tokinoniwa or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Day 4 – Kusatsu - Togakushi**

Breakfast at your ryokan, enjoy the hot springs until your departure time.

Head to Nagano to visit the 5 Togakushi shrines at the foot of the Northern Alps. (Lunch break in Nagano City). Arrive at the village and visit 3 Shrines (Hoko-sha, Hinomiko-sha, and Naka-sha), Hoko-sha is the first shrine on our itinerary.

Located in a serene setting, it is known for its beautiful architecture and tranquil atmosphere.

You will have the opportunity to explore the grounds, admire the intricate details of the shrine, and learn about its religious practices and rituals.

Next, we will visit Hinomiko-sha, another important shrine in the area. This shrine is dedicated to the worship of the sun goddess, Amaterasu. As you explore the shrine, you will discover its unique design and symbolism, as well as the role it plays in Japanese mythology and religious beliefs.

Our final stop is Naka-sha, a shrine that holds historical significance and is revered by locals. Here, you can take in the peaceful surroundings, offer prayers, and learn about the shrine's connection to the local community.

Transfer to your overnight accommodation; Shukubo is a unique accommodation to stay overnight in a Buddhist temple or monastery.

Shojin-ryori (monk vegetarian) dinner at Shukubo.

*Accommodation: Shukubo Takei Ryokan or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



## **Day 5 – Togakushi - Hakuba - Matsumoto**

Breakfast at shukubo.

Depart for a tour of the remaining 5 Togakushi shrines: First, we will visit Oku-sha, a revered shrine nestled in the beautiful natural surroundings of Nagano. Oku-sha is known for its tranquil atmosphere and its connection to the local folklore and traditions. As we explore the shrine, you will have the opportunity to admire the intricate architecture, learn about the shrine's history, and experience the peaceful ambiance that is often associated with Japanese shrines.

Next, we will proceed to Kuzuryu-sha, another notable shrine in Nagano. Kuzuryu-sha holds a special place in the hearts of locals and visitors alike due to its unique features and spiritual significance. The shrine is dedicated to a specific deity or concept, and our guide will provide insights into its meaning and importance within the local culture.

The Togakushi Ninpo Museum is a fascinating cultural institution located in the scenic Togakushi region of Nagano Prefecture, Japan. This museum is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the rich history and traditions of the Togakure-ryu school of ninjutsu, a renowned ninja clan that originated in the area. After lunch, go onto Hakuba Village, Aoni Traditional Buildings Preservation District; This district is dedicated to preserving the traditional architecture and way of life of the Aoni people, who are a part of the indigenous Ainu ethnic group.

Continue onto Matsumoto, upon arrival check into your hotel.

*Accommodation: Matsumoto Hotel Kagetsu or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

## **Day 6 – Matsumoto - Okuhida**

Breakfast at hotel.

Embark on an enchanting journey through the heart of Nagano Prefecture in Japan, where tradition meets modernity, and natural beauty abounds. This tour takes you to several captivating destinations, each with its own unique charm.

### **Matsumoto Castle - The Black Crow Castle**

Your today's adventure begins in Matsumoto, where you'll visit the iconic Matsumoto Castle, also known as the "Crow Castle" due to its striking black exterior. This well-preserved 16th century fortress is a designated national treasure and offers a glimpse into Japan's feudal history. Explore the castle's interior, climb its steep wooden stairs, and enjoy panoramic views of the city from the top floor.

**Soba Making Experience - Taste of Tradition**; Immerse yourself in Japanese culinary culture with a soba making experience. Under the guidance of a skilled soba chef, you'll learn the art of crafting these thin, delicious buckwheat noodles. Afterward, savour your creations in a traditional soba meal, complemented by fresh seasonal ingredients.

**Free time at Nakamachi and Nawate Street - Stroll Through History**; Take a leisurely walk through Nakamachi and Nawate Street in Matsumoto, where historic Edo-era buildings and charming shops await. Nakamachi, with its well-preserved merchant houses, offers a glimpse into the past. Explore Nawate Street's quirky atmosphere, known for its whimsical frog-themed shops and artwork.

Head to the tranquil Okuhida Onsen Village nestled in the Japanese Alps. This picturesque hot spring village offers a peaceful escape surrounded by lush forests and majestic mountains. Relax in the therapeutic mineral-rich waters of an onsen, allowing your cares to melt away. The village's serene ambiance and rejuvenating baths make it a haven for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Transfer to Okuhida, check-in at ryokan (Japanese hot spring inn).

At leisure in ryokan, dinner at ryokan.

*Accommodation: Takumi no Yado Miyama Ouan or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner*



### **Day 7 – Okuhida - Kamikochi - Hida/Takayama - Takayama**

Breakfast at ryokan.

Kamikochi half day hiking tour; \*Since private cars are not allowed in Kamikochi, all tourists need to use regular buses.

Kamikochi local bus 8:50-9:25 From the Akandana parking lot, take a bus to Kamikochi bus terminal you'll set out from Kappa Bridge, an iconic wooden suspension bridge that offers a fantastic vantage point for photographing the crystal-clear waters of the Azusa River.

The trail follows the left bank of the river, providing ever-changing perspectives of the river and the lush forests. You'll be surrounded by towering peaks and pristine wilderness. Continue your hike through dense forests, with the soothing sounds of the rushing river as your constant companion. The trail is well-maintained and suitable for hikers of various skill levels.

As you approach Myojin Pond, you'll be greeted by a serene and reflective body of water, nestled amidst the mountains. This spot is often considered one of the most scenic in the entire Kamikochi area.

Return to the bus terminal along the right bank of the Azusa River. Back to hotel by regular bus.

Pick up your luggage and the Private car will take you to Hida.

You will stop in the town of Shirakabe, discover the charm of the town of Shirakabe Storehouses, also known as the White-Walled District, as well as the scenic Seto River and the serene Enkoji Temple. This tour takes you on a cultural and historical journey through Japan's picturesque countryside.

Continue onto Takayama, upon arrival in Takayama take part in a Japanese sake tasting at Sakagura breweries. Sample a variety of sake styles, from dry to sweet, and gain an appreciation for the nuanced flavours and aromas of this iconic Japanese beverage.

The historic district of Sanmachi, renowned for its well-preserved Edo-era streetscapes. Wander through the narrow lanes lined with beautifully preserved wooden merchant houses, sake breweries, and charming shops.

Check into your hotel

*Accommodation: Hotel Associa Takayama Resort or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

### **Day 8 – Takayama - Shirakawago - Kanazawa**

Breakfast at hotel.

Transfer to Shirakawago, immerse yourself in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed village of Shirakawago, known for its iconic Gassho-zukuri architecture, on a memorable tour that includes a visit to the Gassho-zukuri Folk House Minkaen and the Ogimachi Castle Ruins Observation Deck. This tour offers a fascinating glimpse into the unique cultural and historical heritage of this remote village.

Shirakawago Gassho-zukuri Folk House Minkaen; Wander through the museum's exhibits, where you'll see various styles of these distinctive thatched-roof farmhouses, each characterized by its steeply pitched roof designed to withstand heavy snowfall.

Hike or take a shuttle to reach the observation deck, which sits atop a hill overlooking the thatched-roof houses, lush rice paddies, and surrounding mountains. The scenery is particularly stunning during different seasons, including the lush green of summer and the snowy wonderland of winter.

Transfer to Kanazawa visit Oumicho Market, often referred to as "Kanazawa's Kitchen." Here, you'll discover an array of fresh seafood, local produce, and Kanazawa's specialty dishes. Stroll through the market and savour various street foods or dine at a seafood restaurant to try the freshest catch of the day.



Kenrokuen: one of Japan's most celebrated landscape gardens. Marvel at the meticulously manicured gardens, serene ponds, teahouses, and seasonal flowers. Kenrokuen is particularly stunning during cherry blossom season and autumn foliage.

Nagamachi samurai residence ruins; Kanazawa's samurai heritage with a visit to Nagamachi, the former samurai district. Explore the ruins of samurai residences, characterized by earthen walls, narrow lanes, and well-preserved gatehouses.

Transfer to hotel.

*Accommodation: The Hotel Sanraku Kanazawa or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

### **Day 9 – Kanazawa – Tokyo**

Breakfast at hotel, at leisure in the morning transfer to train station for Shinkansen Bullet Train to Tokyo

Meet your driver at Tokyo Station and transfer to hotel.

*Accommodation: Hotel The Celestine or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

### **Day 10 – Tokyo**

Breakfast at hotel, day is at leisure to see more of Tokyo or do some shopping.

*Accommodation: Hotel The Celestine or similar*

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

### **Day 11 – Tokyo departure**

Check out of the hotel and you will be transferred in your private vehicle to Haneda Airport for your homebound flight.

*Meals Included: Breakfast*

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

### **AIR CANCELLATION/CHANGE POLICY**

Depending on the fare rule, a refund may NOT be allowed, or a refund/change fee may be applied. If the fare is non-refundable, the whole ticket cost including fare, tax, fee, and charge is non-refundable. Contact your Travel Advisor for further details.

### **LAND CANCELLATION POLICY**

We understand that sometimes plans change, and you may need to cancel your land arrangements.

Cancellation fees: The amount of your refund will depend on the specific product associated with your booking. Certain bookings, such as those with non-refundable hotels and services, may not be eligible for any refund at all. In such cases, the full cost of your booking, will be non-refundable.

For specific details about your cancellation policy and any applicable fees, please contact your Travel Advisor. They will be able to provide you with personalized information based on your individual booking.

### **VISA**

A tourist visa might be required to enter the country you are travelling to on an Australian passport. Please visit <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/> for up-to-date information regarding visa requirements. Contact your Travel Advisor for further information.

### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

Travel Insurance is highly recommended, please contact your Travel Advisor for insurance options.