



Japan

Planning a trip to Japan? Then you should talk to us... We offer independent expert advice and the ability to deliver top quality itineraries with the best tour operators that are exceptional value for money. Arranging your travel through The Specialist Travel Consultancy also reduces the time you have to spend researching and planning your trip. And our service is completely free!

We arrange tailor made trips:

- Cultural tours •
- Walking & trekking •
- In-depth geography tours •
- Link school visits •

Contact us to discuss your travel requirements on **0845 838 7667** or for more information on the service we offer please visit our website: www.thestc.co.uk

Facts & Highlights

Full Name: Japan

Area: 9,956,960 sq km (3.7m sq ml)

Population: 127.7 million (2006)

Capital: Tokyo

Language(s): Japanese

Religion(s): Shintoism & Buddhism. Christian minorities.

Currency: Yen

Government: Constitutional monarchy .

Electricity: 100V, 50/60 Hz. Two flat blade pin plugs, sometimes with a rounded earth pin.

Time: GMT + 9 Hours



Tokyo: Visit one of the world's busiest and most amazing cities: temples, gardens, the world's biggest market and the famous J-pop Karaoke bar.

Kyoto: Visit the city's extraordinary shrines and ancient temples and take an evening city walk in the district of Gion looking for Geishas.

Hakone National Park: The home of Mt. Fuji and many of Japan's other geographical treasures.

Hiroshima: Visit the peace garden at the site of the first A-bomb strike.

The Japanese Alps: Walk amongst ancient forests and majestic and often snow-capped peaks.

The Art of Eating: Explore the true art of food in the original home of sushi.

Sumo: A visit to the spectacle that is a sumo contest is sure to add weight to any itinerary!

Hi-tech wizardry: Marvel at the hi-tech revolution: travel by Bullet train or tour vast car plants and robotics factories.

To experience Japan is to experience the ultimate contrast - a colourful and vibrant blend of ancient traditions alongside the very latest creations in hi-tech industrialisation and gadgetry.

As a major world economic power and a country with a geographically rich and active environment, Japan is a fascinating destination for schools. Whatever your requirements, we can create a tailor-made itinerary that will capture the true essence of this country and its unique culture.

Japan's ultra-reliable rail system is famous for operating to the minute. It is a comfortable and highly effective means to get around. The Bullet train, or Shinkansen as it is known in Japan, is the main mode of transport used on most itineraries, but where necessary coaches, boats, funicular trains and chair-lifts may also be used, not forgetting one's own feet.

If you are planning a trip for a small group (around 14 - 16 maximum) then we will be able to make use of the traditional Japanese guesthouses (Ryokans) for much of your accommodation. The welcome and service here is an art form in itself and as much part of Japanese culture as are sushi and robotics. For larger groups, we will continue the theme where possible, with smaller, locally run hotels, staying clear of the soulless international hotel chains.

Tokyo is a whirlwind of a city, and with a population of 35.3 million people, it is also the world's largest. It's worth spending a few days here to experience the temples, museums, markets, gardens and karaoke bars that go to make up this lively city.

Contrast this city life with the quiet backroads, shrines and trails of the Southern Alps and you could be forgiven for thinking that you had visited two different countries.

A short journey south of Tokyo brings you to Hakone National Park, the home of Mt. Fuji. If the weather is kind you will be treated to magnificent views of this majestic, but notoriously shy, mountain. The area is a geographer's dream with hot springs, sulphur fumaroles and a geographically rich landscape.

Further south, the city of Kyoto is considered by many to be Japan's most exquisite. Home to thousands of shrines, temples and gardens it is also the best place for a night stroll in search of Geisha.

A visit to the Peace Memorial Park and museum at Hiroshima should be on any educational tour, representing a sobering and poignant reminder of the devastation and loss of life that occurred here over 60 years ago. Hiroshima is also home to the fun and informative Mazda car factory and we can arrange for a private tour of the giant facility if required.

Trekking possibilities in Japan are many and varied. We can arrange for classic ascents of mountains such as Mt. Fuji and Mt Yarigatake, as well as walking ancient trails amongst UNESCO listed mountain forests, and once important trade routes through the hills.

Contact us to discuss your requirements and we will take time and care to establish a programme that reflects your needs.



Suggested Itineraries

12 Day Geography / Highlights Tour

DAY 1 Fly London/Tokyo

2/3 Arrive Tokyo. Visit historic sites, temples, the earthquake simulation centre, J-pop Karaoke, and sample a sushi breakfast in the Tsukiji fish market.

4/6 Head to Hakone National Park for walks and an exploration of this famous volcanic area.

7/8 From a base in Kyoto explore the devastation caused by the 1995 earthquake that hit nearby Kobe, then head to the hills to explore the secret and historically significant walking trails.

9/10 Head to Hiroshima for a visit to the A-bomb peace park and a visit to the amazing Mazda car factory.

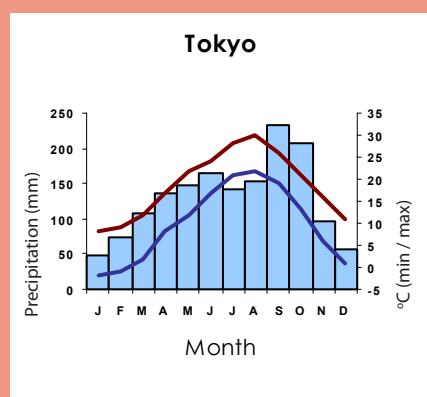
11/12 Return to Tokyo at nearly 300 Kms per hour on the bullet train for some last minute shopping and the flight home.

Geography & Climate

Japan's geography is fascinating. Due to its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Japan lies in a major earthquake zone, and earthquakes of varying sizes occur very frequently. The country is also very mountainous with numerous active volcanoes, a string of snow-capped peaks extending along much of the country and many thermal springs, some of which have been developed for tourism.

Climate wise, Japan lies in the northern temperate zone, but there is significant variation between the north and south of the country. The main rainy season runs from May to late September, with the later months often being characterised by typhoons. In winter heavy snow fall is commonplace in some areas.

The best time of year to visit Japan is generally considered to be spring with the characteristic cherry blossoms set on a backdrop of clear blue skies. Autumn is also a good time to visit when the leaf colours are at their most spectacular, but the weather is generally wetter .



17 Day - Culture andT trekking

DAY 1 Depart UK

2 Arrive Tokyo, city highlights tour.

3/4 In Tokyo, transfer to Lake Kawaguchi and base of Mt Fuji. Visit Hakone National Park and ascend nearby peak for, hopefully, great views of Mt. Fuji.

5 Train to Kiso, walk local historic trade trails through ancient forests.

6/7 In Kiso, descend from the southern alps by train to Kyoto, visit famous Buddhist temple

8/9 Explore North and Central Kyoto by foot, geisha spotting in the district of Gion.

10/11 Train to Nara region, commence trek along 'Yamanobe Road' - Japan's oldest path, through historic Asuka region, transfer to the mountainous Yoshino region

12/14 Commence trek along Omine pilgrim trail through conifer forest, cherry orchards and past wayside Shinto shrines, optional climb to the major peaks.

15 Complete trek, travel to Osaka

16 Depart Osaka late evening

17 Arrive UK.

National Holidays

1 Jan New Year's Day

14 Jan Coming of Age Day

11 Feb National Foundation Day

20 Mar Vernal Equinox

29 Apr Showa Day

3 May Constitution Memorial Day

5 May Greenery Day

5 May Children's Day

21 Jul Marine Day

15 Sep Respect for the Aged Day

23 Sep Autumnal Equinox

13 Oct Sports Day

3 Nov Culture Day

24 Nov Labour Thanksgiving Day

23 Dec Birthday of the Emperor

Festivals

The Hina Matsuri (doll) festival happens on March 3rd every year. Originally from China, the festival celebrates the tradition to make a doll for the transferral of impurities and bad luck from the person. The dolls were then placed in a river, forever banishing the bad omens.

Price Guide

With many options and all itineraries tailor-made, prices vary enormously depending on the length and style of trip required, as well as the group size. A simple ten-day cultural tour is likely to be in the region of £2,000 per person. Extended tours of two or three weeks, perhaps including trekking



or specialist facilities, would feasibly cost between up to and beyond £3,000 pp. Contact us for more details and to discuss your requirements. We will devise an itinerary in line with your needs and budget.

Money

Perhaps surprisingly, considering its position as one of the world's most technologically advanced nations, Japanese society is mainly cash driven. Credit cards have only recently become more popular. Cash machines accept limited types of cards and are not usually open 24hrs.

Regulations & Red Tape

A full passport, valid for 6 months after your return date, is required for travel to Japan. British passport holders do not currently require a visa.

Useful Addresses

Japan National Tourist Organisation:

Heathcoat House, 20 Saville Row, London

W1S 3PR. Tel: 0207 734 9638

Web: www.seejapan.co.uk

More Information

To discuss the travel possibilities that Japan offers in greater detail and receive free independent advice on potential tour operators, please contact:

The Specialist Travel Consultancy

PO Box 514

Exeter

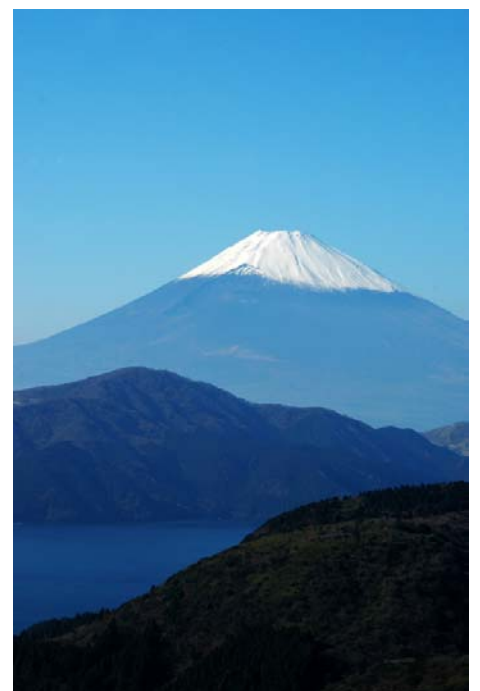
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