

JAPAN AUTUMN TOUR 2018

NOV 1 – NOV 15

SMALL-SCALE PERSONALIZED TOUR
Minimum 6 – maximum 10 participants

Travel into the history and mythology of real Japan

TRADITIONAL

KARATSU KUNCHI FESTIVAL Boisterous autumn celebrations at a small castle town
USUKI BAMBOO LIGHT FESTIVAL Glowing welcome to a mythological princess

HISTORICAL

NAGASAKI and CHIRAN Atomic bomb & Kamikaze suicide bomber peace museums
KAGOSHIMA Birthplace of modern Japan's transition from feudal society

SPIRITUAL

USUKI SEKIBUTSU Largest collection of rock-carved Buddhas in Japan
KIRISHIMA FIRE FESTIVAL Fires are lit to guide the gods in a 1500 year old Shinto rite

RELAXING

YUFUIN ONSEN Hot spring baths in a rural landscape
SENGANEN GARDEN Using the live volcano Sakurajima as borrowed scenery

Previous participants say:

"Thank you for a wonderful, amazing experience. Thank you for your incredibly generous spirit as you led us around Japan, and even more for opening my eyes and heart to this beautiful country and its people."

"Thank you Gillian, for a job well done ... you are a very good mix of Bob the Kelpie, The Mum and The Big Sister brave enough to let her younger siblings off the hook for a bit of an independent adventure."

\$4,680 AUD

14 nights' accommodation, all breakfasts, 5 dinners, all entries

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This price is land only: 14 day Japan Rail Pass ¥46,390 and return airfares not included.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Thurs Nov 1: As most travellers will fly into Kansai airport, Osaka, we will meet and stay at the airport hotel. Those already in Japan can join us at the airport hotel or meet us at Shin-Osaka station on the following day.

Accommodation: Nikko Hotel at Kansai airport. This hotel is within the airport precinct.

Day 2 & 3 Fri Nov 2 & Sat Nov 3: KARATSU & IMARI

We will set off on our first experience of the fabulous Japanese train system when we catch the Haruka Express, at 8:45 and travel by the Shinkansen bullet train Sakura, Limited Express Midori, and the Matsuura line to arrive in Imari at 14:24. After off-loading our luggage, we will take taxis 10 minutes into the mountains to the 'hidden' pottery village of Okawachiyama. Imari is most notable because of Imari porcelain, which is the European collectors' name for Japanese porcelain wares made in the nearby town of Arita. The porcelain was exported from the port of Imari specifically for the European export trade. On November 3, after a leisurely breakfast, we catch the 'Yellow One-Man Diesel' 55 minutes through the countryside to Karatsu.



In Karatsu the townsfolk will be celebrating the Autumn Festival Karatsu Kunchi. The town echoes with the sound of drums, flutes, and shouts as huge Hikiyama Floats are pulled through the streets and into the sea. This festival features floats called hikiyama, the largest ones being 6.8 meters tall and 3 tons in weight. These gigantic floats, which are lacquered and finished with gold and silver leaf, are designed in the images of lions, samurai helmets, sea bream, and flying dragons called hiryo, and deserve to be described as artistic masterpieces. The oldest surviving float is the Akajishi - Red Lion, which was produced back in 1819; it has since undergone major repairs 6 times, and still retains its original form to this day. In the late 19th century, Karatsu was a centre of coal

production and we may have time to visit to the former home of coal baron Taketori and see a glimpse of the high life during the Meiji period and the construction techniques and artistic design of those times.

Accommodation: Western style accommodation with breakfasts.

DAY 4 Sun Nov 4: USUKI

Usuki was prosperous under the rule of the Feudal Lord Sorin Otomo in the 16th century who built the Usuki Castle there. Many remains of those days are present in this city. Nioza, located to the southwest of the Usuki Castle, is a chic street lined with white walls, stone walls and a stone pavement called "Nioza Historical Street". Approximately 400 years ago, the Dutch ship Liefde drifted ashore at Sashiu in the northern part of Usuki, opening up a new age in Japanese diplomatic history. We will see the annual Bamboo Light Festival, which celebrates the legend of a princess being returned to her parents, with 20,000 bamboo candles lit all over the town to help lead the princess home. O



Accommodation: Western style with breakfast and a special Shojin ryori (Vegetarian Zen cooking) dinner and tea ceremony at Seigetsuan (Star moon hermitage)

DAYS 5 & 6 Mon Nov 5 & Tues Nov 6: YUFUIN

Before leaving for Yufuin we will take a bus to a group of Buddha figures carved out of the natural rock wall of a cliff about 4km outside Usuki. With more than 60 figures, it is the largest collections of rock-carved Buddhas in Japan and is believed to have been carved during the 12th century and the 14th century, that is, in the latter half of the Heian Period (797-1192) or the



Kamakura Period (1192-1333). Yufuin is located on a flat river basin surrounded by mountains. The most prominent feature of Yufuin's skyline is the twin peaked Mount Yufu, which hovers over the town and serves as the backdrop for many scenic views. The area is rural and shortly after leaving the main walking route, travelers will come across the rice paddies and farmhouses that make up a considerable part of the town. Our ryokan is in the hills above the town with a direct view of Mt Yufu from the outdoor bath.

Accommodation: Japanese style hot spring ryokan with dinner and breakfast

DAYS 7, 8 & 9 Wed Nov 7, Thurs Nov 8 & Fri Nov 9: KAGOSHIMA

Kagoshima was a main site of the Meiji Restoration (1868) and Japan's rapid industrialisation and modernisation.

The Museum of the Meiji Restoration is dedicated to Kagoshima's part in the tumultuous events of the 1860s and 1870s and outlines the careers of such local heroes as Saigo Takamori (1828-1877) and Okubo Toshimichi (1830-1878) using dioramas and video displays.

One of the most striking features of Sanganen garden is its use of the volcanic island Sakurajima and Kagoshima Bay as borrowed scenery. The garden also includes small ponds, streams, shrines and a bamboo grove. Just outside the garden stands a long stone building that functioned as one of Japan's earliest Western style machinery factories and now houses the Shoko Shuseikan Museum about the Shimazu Clan and their early efforts at industrialization.

In Chiran, a scenic hour by bus from Kagoshima, there is a street of old samurai residences and gardens built in the later part of the Edo Period that are steeped in the atmosphere of the age. The feudal lord of Satsuma domain, present Kagoshima Prefecture, the main driving force of Japan's modernization in the 19th century, didn't station his samurai warriors in Kagoshima City, but in the many districts of the domain. Each of the samurai lived in their own settlement to rule the assigned district. Chiran was one of them, and the old townscape dating back to the 18th century is very well preserved. Seven of these gardens have been designated by the national government as places of scenic beauty. Chiran was also a base for kamikaze pilots at the end of the Pacific War. The Chiran Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots displays, preserves, and collects the valuable documents of these pilots who were human sacrifices in Japan's last desperate days of the Pacific War.

Accommodation: Western hotel with hot spring bath and breakfast



DAY 10 Sat Nov 10: KIRISHIMA



We will spend the night near the Shinto shrine Kirishima-jingu. We participate in a Shinto fire ceremony to commemorate the descent of the god, Niniginomikoto, at the former ground of Kirishima-Jingu, Furumiyaato. During this ceremony, Shinto priests in white robes begin to pray when night falls and light a fire to help the gods find their way back to earth. Prayers written on wooden tablets are added to the fire so that the prayers will rise to heaven.

Accommodation: Japanese/Western style hot spring ryokan with dinner and breakfast

DAYS 11 & 12 Sun Nov 11 & Mon Nov 12 NAGASAKI

On the morning of November 11, we travel by train to Nagasaki where we will have the opportunity to visit the Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. The next day, will visit some other areas of Nagasaki including the remains of Dejima, a man-made island in the port of Nagasaki, constructed in 1636 to segregate Portuguese residents from the Japanese population and control their missionary activities.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast

DAYS 13 & 14 Tues Nov 13 & Wed Nov 14 FUKUOKA

We will have lunch and a stroll through Canal City, a large shopping and entertainment complex, including about 250 shops, cafes and restaurants, a theater, game center, cinemas, two hotels and a canal running through the middle. Fukuoka is hosting one of the 6 annual Sumo tournaments held in Japan and later in the afternoon we will spend a few hours as spectators of this arcane sport. Sumo was, originally, a performance to entertain Shinto deities and retains many links to Shintoism, such as, the symbolic purification of the ring with salt. It is much more entertaining than those who have never seen it may suspect and includes much enthusiastic cheering from the audience.

On our walk back to our hotel we will eat at yatai (food stalls) along the river on Nakasu Island. Yatai can generally seat about seven or eight people and provide an atmospheric outdoor environment to enjoy various foods and mingle with the locals.

The next day we can explore more of Fukuoka, such as, the Asian Art Museum; the Hakata Machiya Furusatokan, a folk museum spread over three machiya (traditional townhouses) recreating a Hakata nagare (neighbourhood unit) from the late Meiji era; Shofukuji, Japan's first Zen temple; and Tōchō-ji which houses Japan's largest wooden Buddha. We may also travel 45 minutes by train to Komyozenji temple to see the autumnal beauty of its Zen moss and sand garden.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast and 1 dinner

DAY 15 Thurs Nov 15: Today the tour ends. The final day of our rail pass will be used to travel the 3 hours and 45 minutes to Kansai airport or for ongoing travel for those who have chosen to stay longer in Japan. Depending on flight times there may be time to do some last minute shopping for traditional Hakata crafts (Hakata hasami (Scissors), Hakata Magemono (Wooden-ware), Hakata Hariko (Papier Mache), Hakata Koma (Spinning top), Hakata Mizuhiki (Decorative Cord), Hakata Ningyo (Doll), Hakata Ori (Woven textile).

TOUR COST: \$4,680 AUD

14 nights' accommodation, all breakfasts, 5 dinners, all entries

Single supplement AU\$600

(Single accommodation cannot be guaranteed on the 3 nights in Japanese accommodation.)

Japan Rail Pass and airfares not included

BOOKING DEADLINE: Friday June 1, 2018

ORIENTATION: Sunday August 4, 2018 in Melbourne - An opportunity for participants to meet in an informal environment to share their expectations, hopes, interests, and concerns and to get to know each other while enjoying home-cooked Japanese food. Those who cannot attend will be invited to contribute by forwarding questions/comments or participate via Skype.

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Friday August 10, 2018

FITNESS LEVEL: An average level of fitness is required. Participants may choose to have a rest day or take a taxi if tired. The bedding in the Japanese accommodation will be futon on tatami mat flooring. We will walk 3 -5km at a leisurely pace on some days. You will need to be able to manage your own luggage on/off trains and up to 600m from stations to hotels.