

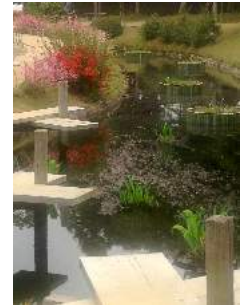
## JAPAN SPRING TOUR APRIL 2 – 15, 2018 ITINERARY

**Day 1:** The tour begins on the evening of Monday April 2 when we meet at the hotel at Kansai airport.

**Accommodation:** Western style with breakfast

### **Day 2:** Tuesday April 3 **OKAYAMA**

Our introduction to the super-efficient Japanese rail system will be on the Narita Express to Shin-Osaka and the Hikari Shinkansen bullet train to Okayama. Okayama developed as a castle town during the Edo Period (1603-1867) and became a significant regional power. Okayama's most famous attraction is Korakuen Garden, which is ranked as one of the three best landscape gardens in Japan. Okayama Castle creates dramatic borrowed scenery for the garden. The population of Okayama is 720,000.



**Accommodation:** Western style with breakfast

### **Days 3, 4, and 5:** Wed April 4, Thurs April 5, Fri April 6: **MATSUE**



Matsue is located at the eastern shores of Lake Shinji. Due to its location between Lake Shinji, Nakaumi (another lake) and the Sea of Japan, it is known as the "water city". Canals run throughout the city, and there are over 500 bridges. Matsue (pop.140,000) is the capital of Shimane prefecture, one of Japan's least densely populated regions. This pleasant and relaxed town is reputed for 18th century teahouses, a samurai district and one of Japan's last surviving castles preserved in its original state. Yushien is a wonderful stroll

garden with waterfalls, streams, and dry landscapes as well as a stunning display of peonies. The Adachi Art Museum is superbly set in an astonishingly beautiful garden, which has been ranked number 1 by the American Journal of Japanese Gardens for 13 consecutive years. The museum is also well known for its collection of Modern Japanese painting, comprising approximately 1,500 of Japan's most highly regarded paintings produced after the Meiji period and highlighting the works of Yokoyama Taikan. The "Temple of Moonlight" is the family temple of the Matsudaira clan, Matsue's longest reigning family, from 1638 to 1871. Each of the gates and graves of the nine generations of the Matsudaira clan represent a different period in the progression of Edo era architectural craftsmanship.

**Accommodation:** Western style with breakfast

### **Days 6 and 7:** Sat April 7 and Sun April 8 **INUYAMA**



These two days will be spent in the castle town of Inuyama on the shores of the picturesque Kiso River, known as the Rhine of Japan. Inuyama celebrates a spring festival over these two days. 2018 will be the 384th time this event has been held. On the Saturday evening huge wheeled floats are covered with candle-lit lanterns and pulled through the streets by traditionally dressed young men to the sounds of flutes and drums and the cheers of the crowd. The next day, each float is presented to the shrine and the top section of the float becomes a stage for the performance of folk tales by mechanical dolls manipulated by strings from within the float.

The Urakuen garden and the Jo-an teahouse inside the garden, built by Urakusai Oda, a brother of Nobunaga Oda, and designated a National Treasure in 1936 as one of the three best extant tea-ceremony buildings in Japan, is in the grounds of the hotel in which we will be staying.

**Accommodation:** Onsen (hot spring) hotel with western rooms and Japanese style breakfast and dinner.

### **Days 8 & 9:** Mon April 9 and Tues April 10 **HIMEJI**

Himeji Castle is widely considered Japan's most spectacular castle. Unlike many other Japanese castles, Himeji Castle was never destroyed in wars, earthquakes or fires and survives in its original form. It is both a national treasure and a UNESCO world heritage site. Koko-en is a recently constructed Japanese style



garden, which was opened in 1992 on the former site of the feudal lords' west residence (Nishi-Oyashiki). It consists of nine separate gardens designed in various garden styles of the Edo period. On our second day in Himeji we can visit the tranquil Engyouji temple complex on the top of Mt Shosha. It is reached by bus and a cable car, which provides great views. Those who wish can stay in town for shopping, a museum visit, or just a wander around town. Himeji's population is 542,000.

**Accommodation:** Western style with breakfast

**Days 10, 11 and 12:** Wed Apr 11, Thurs Apr 12, Fri April 13 **KYOTO**

There is so much to see in Kyoto that the final itinerary will be confirmed based on the interests of participants and could include a day trip to nearby Nara. Even if you have been to Kyoto before, we will be able to find something new for you.

**Accommodation:** Western style with breakfast



**Day 13:** Sat Apr 14 **HIEIZANSAKAMOTO AND OGOTO ONSEN**

Just a short train ride from Kyoto is the town of Sakamoto where the Hiyoshi Shinto Shrine will be celebrating the dynamic and spectacular Sanno festival, in which seven portable shrines each weighing one-ton are carried through town and loaded onto a boat to cross a portion of Lake Biwa. Sakamoto is at the foot of Mt Hiei and once flourished as the temple town of the retired monks of the Mt Hiei's Enryakuji Temple. In this town the syncretic relationship of Buddhism and Shintoism is in evidence with priests from Enryakuji taking part in the Shinto Sanno festival. Hiyoshi shrine was established about 2100 years ago and is the head shrine of about 3800 shrines named 'Hiyoshi shrine', 'Hie shrine' and 'Sanno shrine' throughout Japan. We will spend our last night together at a hot spring hotel where we will be able to soak away any weariness and share highlights of our time together and perhaps some haiku poems over a Japanese multi-course meal.



**Accommodation:** Hot spring hotel, western or Japanese rooms with breakfast and dinner.

**Day 14:** Sun Apr 15

Those who have booked evening flights will have time before departure to explore some more of Lake Biwa. It will take us about 3 hours to get to Kansai airport so if you are departing at 9pm you will have until about 3pm available. If you booked a 10:30am flight you would need to be at the Hiezansakamoto station at 5:45am.

**COST land only:** AU\$4400 twin share 13 nights' accommodation, all breakfasts, 3 dinners, all entries

**Not included:** Return airfares and 14-day rail pass which is currency exchange related and currently \$527

**Single supplement:** \$400 (Single rooms cannot be guaranteed in Inuyama and Hiezansakamoto.)

**BOOKING DEADLINE:** Friday November 3, 2017

**FULL PAYMENT DUE:** Thursday February 8, 2018

**CONTACT:** Gillian Jones for booking conditions, booking forms, and further details

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**FITNESS:** An average level of fitness is required. 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.