

# JAPAN AUTUMN TOUR OCT 30 – NOV 13 2019

SMALL-SCALE PERSONALIZED TOUR  
Minimum 6 – maximum 12 participants

## Travel into the history and mythology of real Japan

### TRADITIONAL

**BIZEN, ARITA, ONTA** Centres of 400 to 800-year-old ceramic traditions

**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

**KORAKUEN & SENGANEN STROLL GARDENS, CHIRAN SAMURAI GARDENS, & KOMYOZENJI ZEN GARDEN** Different aspects of Japanese garden design

### 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.”

**\$4,860 AUD**

14 nights' accommodation, all breakfasts, 4 dinners, all entries

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This price is land only: 14 day Japan Rail Pass (currency exchange linked and currently AUD\$610) and return airfares not included.

## ITINERARY

**DAY 1 Wed Oct 30:** 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 consult me about the possibility of meeting somewhere else on the following day.

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

### **Day 2 Thurs Oct 31: OKAYAMA & BIZEN**

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. The travel time will be about 2 hours. Okayama developed as a castle town during the Edo Period (1603-1867) and became a significant regional power. After dropping our luggage at our hotel we will visit Okayama's most famous attraction, Korakuen Garden, which is ranked as one of the three best landscape gardens in Japan. It covers 14ha and was completed in 1700. Okayama Castle creates dramatic borrowed scenery for the garden. Later we will travel about 34 minutes by train to the nearby pottery town Imbe, the home of Bizen pottery, one of Japan's most loved and oldest types of pottery. Both the clay and the wood that fires the kilns are sourced locally. The soil used is very fine and contains high iron content, which gives the pottery its distinctive colours. We will explore the town's many traditional workshops and craft communities and meet some of the artisans who live and work in the town. If the garden is enough for you, you may choose to get a taxi back from Korakuen to the hotel rather than visit Imbe.

The population of Okayama is approximately 720,000.

Accommodation: Western style accommodation with breakfasts.

### **DAYS 3 & 4 Fri Nov 1 & Sat Nov 2: USUKI**

In the 16th century, Usuki was prosperous under the rule of the Feudal Lord Sorin Otomo who completed his castle there in 1562. Many remains of those days are present in this city including houses of samurai families and a chic street lined with white walls and 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. The English pilot of the vessel, William Adams, became a favourite of the country's leader Tokugawa Ieyasu and his story is depicted in the James Clavell novel 'Shogun'. We will visit the nearby Buddha figures carved out of the natural rock wall of a cliff, known as "Usuki Sekibutsu". With more than 60 figures, it is the largest collection of rock-carved Buddhas in Japan. It is believed that they were carved during the 12th century and the 14th century, that is, in the latter half of the Heian Period (797-1192) and the Kamakura Period (1192-1333). We will also visit the workshop of the recently resurrected Usukiyaki pottery style. This workshop is part of a movement amongst young people in Usuki to keep alive the values of simple rural life. They are encouraging each other to grow organic vegetables, restore old farmhouses, and create handmade goods. Usuki will be celebrating the annual Bamboo Light Festival while we are there. Usuki celebrates the legend of a princess being returned to her parents, with 20,000 bamboo candles lit all through the town. As well as the beautiful candlelit scenes there are displays of local arts and crafts, a parade, and contemporary and traditional music concerts.



The population of Usuki is approximately 42,000.

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

### **DAY 5 Sun Nov 3: YUFUIN**

We will relax and unwind from the travel of our first few days in the hot spring town of Yufuin. Twin peaked Mount Yufu rises above this small town. Although the main street is a busy tourist route just outside this area the outlook is rural with rice paddies, farmhouses, and steam rising from thermal hot spring vents. Our modern ryokan nestled in old growth beech forest behind the town provides luxurious indoor and outdoor onsen baths and delicious, exquisitely presented meals.



The population of Yufuin is approximately 12,000.

Accommodation: Japanese style hot spring ryokan with dinner and breakfast

### **DAYS 6 & 7 Mon Nov 4 & Tues Nov 5: HITA, ONTA, & ARITA**

From our base in Hita we will take side trips to Onta and Arita.

Hita, known as a 'little Kyoto', maintains a traditional atmosphere by using gas lamps instead of electric cables on the main street of the Mameda district.

Onta is a mountain pottery village that produces plates and bowls suitable for everyday use called 'Ontayaki'. This village began pottery production in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and today the village consists of ten families, all with large houses and their own kilns. Their pottery strongly features geometric patterns. In the early 20th century a folk arts movement called the "Mingei Movement" began. This movement emphasized the beauty of everyday objects, particularly Japanese daily items. As a result of the Mingei Movement, which was led by Yanagi Muneyoshi and Bernard Leach, the pottery from Ontayaki became well known and highly valued.



Arita was the first place in Japan to produce porcelain. More than 400 years ago Toyotomi Hideyoshi attempted to invade Korea and brought back several highly skilled Korean craftsmen who discovered Kaolin, the mineral required to make porcelain, in Arita in 1616. Several large-scale kilns were subsequently built around Arita, resulting in great prosperity for the town. Arita's pottery was not only made for the domestic market, but also became



popular in China and Europe. Arita-yaki pottery that traveled out of the nearby port of Imari would become known as Imari ware. The Kyushu Ceramic Museum in Arita is Kyushu's largest pottery museum and contains ceramics from all over Kyushu as well as hosting exhibitions of contemporary ceramic artists. While the merchants of

Arita sold pottery along the town's main street, the potters themselves lived in the back alleys and built high walls to conceal their techniques from competitors. These walls, which can still be seen today, were made out of old bricks from the kilns and fragments of discarded pottery and porcelain.

The population of Hita is approximately 67,000.

Accommodation: Western style accommodation with breakfasts.

**DAYS 8 & 9 Wed Nov 6 & Thurs Nov 7: NAGASAKI**

Nagasaki is an attractively situated port city. As one of Japan's closest port cities to the Asian mainland, Nagasaki has played a prominent role in foreign trade relations for many centuries and was the most important of only a very few ports open to restricted numbers of foreign traders during Japan's period of isolation (1603 – 1868). In more recent history, Nagasaki became the second city after Hiroshima to be destroyed by an atomic bomb. We will have the opportunity to visit the Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum. We will also 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 Dutch and Portuguese residents from the Japanese population and control their missionary activities.

The population of Nagasaki is approximately is 430,000.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast

**DAYS 10 & 11 Fri Nov 8 & Sat Nov 9: KAGOSHIMA**

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



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, a bamboo grove, and in autumn a stunning chrysanthemum display. 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.



The population of Kagoshima is approximately is 600,000.

Accommodation: Western hotel with hot spring bath and breakfast

**DAY 12 Sun Nov 10: KIRISHIMA**

We will participate in a more than 1500 year old Shinto fire ceremony near the Shinto shrine Kirishima-jingu. The ceremony commemorates 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. If the weather is fine, there will also be a dramatic display of Japanese drumming, a very 'local' pantomime, and a Japanese rice cake barbecue accompanied by warming sake and shochuu (local wines and spirits).

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

**DAYS 13 & 14 Mon Nov 11 & Tues Nov 12 FUKUOKA**

After dropping off our luggage, we can visit Kushida Shinto Shrine, the Hakata Machiya Furusatokan, a folk museum spread over three machiya (traditional townhouses) and Tōchō-ji Buddhist Temple which houses Japan's largest wooden Buddha. You will then have free time to explore the 10 floors of Hakata railway station shopping precinct, which includes a food basement with a beautiful and extensive array of foods and several tasting opportunities. Or you may prefer to wander through the attractive grounds of Shōfukuji the first Zen temple constructed in Japan founded in 1195 by the priest Eisai, who introduced Zen from China into Japan. The next day we will travel 45 minutes by train to Dazaifu which was established in the late 7th century and served as the administrative center of the entire island of Kyushu for over 500 years. Nowadays, Dazaifu is a small, quiet city where we will visit Dazaifu Tenmangu Shinto Shrine and Komyozenji Zen temple to see the autumnal beauty of its Zen moss and sand garden.

The population of Fukuoka is approximately 1, 580,000.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast and 1 dinner

**DAY 15 Wed Nov 13:** Today the tour ends. The final day of our rail pass will be used to travel to the airport or for ongoing travel for those who have chosen to stay longer in Japan. Please note when booking flights that it takes about 4 and a half hours to get to Kansai airport and the earliest you could get there is 11:20am. Likewise, it takes about 7 and a half hours to get to Narita airport and the earliest you could get there is 2:26pm.

**TOUR COST:** \$4,860 AUD

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

Single supplement AU\$400

(Single accommodation cannot be guaranteed on the 2 nights in Japanese accommodation.)

Japan Rail Pass and airfares not included

**BOOKING DEADLINE:** Friday June 7, 2019

**ORIENTATION:** Sunday August 11, 2019 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:** Wednesday August 21, 2019

**FITNESS LEVEL:** An average level of fitness is required. We will often walk 6 -7 km over a day. Participants may choose to have a rest day or take a taxi if tired. The bedding in the Japanese accommodation will be (surprisingly comfortable) futon on tatami mat flooring.