

*Japan Holidays
Featured Tour*

LEGENDS OF JAPAN TOUR

Departure Date:
20th April & 5th October 2018

Price:
From USD\$5200 pp AUD \$6950-Twin Share



Tour Description

Japan is a timeless country rich with tradition, unique culture and ancient legends. Into this crucible, deep history is fused with colorful mythology.

Japan's history is rooted in the ancient myth or shinwa that describes the tale of Prince Ninigi, the grandson of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. Legend has it that Prince Ninigi descended from the sky, touching down in the area called Takachiho on Kyushu Island.

Your tour will take you to places where Prince Ninigi traveled, including a cave shrine in which his stepdaughter gave birth to his grandson, the founder of Japan's royal dynasty 2,600 years ago. Emperor Jinmu.

On this tour, you will also be immersed in the fierce and bloodied history of the powerful samurais, tracing the battles between the Heike and Genji clans, as they fought to control Japan's capital at Kyoto. We travel to the lush, secluded forests of Gokanosho, where the fugitive Heike clan of samurais fled in 1185, hiding in these rugged hills of Kyushu Island for hundreds of years.

Another key stop on the tour is Kagoshima, capital of Kagoshima Prefecture. Here, General Saigo Takamori, one of the most influential samurai in Japanese history played a major role toppling the Shogun in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) after more than 260 years ruling Japan. Takamori's colorful life spanned the transition from Edo to Meiji period, ushering in Modern Japan. However, the general revolted against the Meiji government in 1877, which became known as Japan's last civil war.

Our final stop on the tour is the Chiran Peace Museum, which honors more than 1,000 kamikaze pilots who gave their lives fighting for Japan. Located on an airbase at Chiran, on Satsuma Peninsula of Kagoshima, this is where hundreds of Special Attack or kamikaze sorties launched in the final months of World War two.

The LEGENDS OF JAPAN tour will take you deep into the soul of Japan, exploring its legends, colorful history and prominent figures that will leave a lasting and profound impact unique among any tours offered of the country. You will gain a new appreciation for Japan's rich and varied mix of myth and reality, tradition and change, as it is played out in bustling cities and remote countryside.

Tour Information

Departure Date

20th April & 5th October 2018
(Cherry blossom or Autumn leaves season)

Price

From USD \$** per person (Price based on 2 persons- Twin Share)

* Minimum 2 pax and Maximum 8 pax

* The more people on tour the lesser the price

* Subject to exchange rate

Inclusions

- 9 Days/8 Nights
- 8 Breakfasts; 7 Lunches; 7 Dinners
- Private Expert Guide in Kyushu
- Private Transfers
- Entrances & Tours

Non Inclusions

- International & domestic flights
- Pre & Post Optional Tours
- Tours or meals not shown on the itinerary.



Itinerary

Day 1 Friday: Tokyo

Arrive at Narita International Airport. After clearing Customs, transfer to hotel near airport via hotel shuttle.

Accommodation: Narita View Hotel

Day 2 Saturday: Tokyo - Kumamoto

Breakfast: Enjoy early breakfast at the hotel.

Return to Narita Airport for Jetstar flight to Fukuoka, arriving at about 10:15am. Here, you'll meet up with Ken Takenaga, who will be your tour guide throughout this trip.

Depart Fukuoka Airport for a day's site-seeing, including cultural landmarks and beautiful countryside.

Dazaifu Tenman-gū – Recharge your mind at this prominent Shinto shrine dedicated to the god of intelligence. As far back as the 7th century, this shrine promoted learning, sincerity and protection from evil. The approach to Dazaifu Tenman-gū is lined with 80 shops, including a uniquely beautiful Starbucks fashioned from 2,000 cedar beams and no nails!

Lunch: We'll have lunch at a local restaurant, where you can enjoy a variety of traditional dishes, after which we depart for Yamaga City, just an hour away.

Yachiyozza Kabuki Theater – In its heyday, Yamaga was a bustling commerce center and onsen (hot springs bathing) destination. Local merchants wanted a place to relax and entertain clients, too. In 1910, they built the Yachiyozza ("Eternal Place") Kabuki Theatre in a beautiful, Edo-style, which is now a National Important Asset. Here, you will sit on tatami mats and marvel at the costumes as well as stage, which features trapdoors and a rotating panel for scene changes.

Dinner: Gourmet experience at one of Kumamoto's favourite restaurants.

Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kumamoto

Japan Holidays

Day 3 Sunday: Kumamoto

Breakfast: Enjoy the hotel buffet before our scenic, 1.5-hour drive to the volcanic Aso National Park.

Daikanbou Observation Point – Today, you will experience first-hand why Kumamoto is known as *The Land of Fire and Water*. From this unique observation point, you will not only enjoy a spectacular, 360-degree view of the Aso Valley and the Five Mountains of Aso (which resemble a sleeping Buddha), but also the world's largest caldera at Mt. Aso, which measures 120km around.

Nakadake Active Volcano – Weather – and Nature! - permitting, we'll also check out the crater at Mt. Naka, which has been actively rumbling and spewing smoke for the past 70 years.

Lunch: We're in for a local hotplate treat unique to the Aso region: Higo steak, which is tender, low-fat beef grilled over charcoal.

Aso Shrine – Dating from 2,200 years ago, this ancient Shinto shrine lost two key artifacts during the April 2016 quakes: its 2-story high Romon Gate and the Haiden offering hall, which is estimated to take several years to repair. Twelve deities are enshrined here, and a special pine tree is believed to bestow good luck in marriage. After touring the shrine area, we'll stroll the nearby streets, tasting a range of refreshing spring waters offered by several shops.

Dinner: Tonight, we'll enjoy more local tastes of the region.

Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kumamoto

Day 4 Monday: Kumamoto

Breakfast: Once again, enjoy the hotel's breakfast buffet before we depart on our day's site-seeing.

Gokanosho – Fasten your seatbelt for an unforgettable journey to the very cauldron of conflict between warring samurai clans. Dubbed the “Land of the Last Samurai”, Gokanosho is tucked into the secluded forests in the center of Kumamoto Prefecture. Hidden among dense pine and bamboo forests, the villages here are home to the Heike clan’s fugitive legend. Redolent with roaring waterfalls, dramatic suspension bridges and mysterious forests, the beauty of Gokanosho is an experience that will pierce your soul and fill your senses with indelible memories! Far off the beaten path of typical tours, Gokanosho is a rare treat for tourists, with breathtaking views enjoyed by a privileged few.

Lunch: Savory noodle soup is the “comfort food” we’ll enjoy at the Double Tree Restaurant in Gokanosho, which also has a small store where you can buy a range of locally-made food items.

Sendan Totodo Waterfall and Suspension Bridges – To bond with the area, you will enjoy a walk in the lush forest to the Sendan Totodo Waterfall, which cascades down steep ravines and gushes into rocky coves below. The experience is further enhanced with strolls across a few suspension bridges that link remote pockets of forest villages, each one offering a stunning view into deep ravines and streambeds far below.

Heike-so Minshuku – Your life may be forever changed spending just a single night at this family-run, remote inn. The Heike-so transports you back to an era in which travelers trekked from outpost to outpost, luxuriating at rustic inns that provided sumptuous meals and relaxing onsen – or hot springs soak – at the end of the day. Your room here will be in the traditional Japanese style, but the hospitality and culinary experience is unforgettably world-class.

Dinner: Expect a sumptuous feast around open fire pits; the local “moonshine” is not to be missed!

Accommodation: Heike-so Minshuku

Day 5 Tuesday: Kumamoto - Kagoshima

Breakfast: Having feasted like royalty at the previous night’s dinner, breakfast is yet another unsurpassed experience at the Heike-so, featuring multiple, delectable courses in a cozy setting.

Aoi Aso-jinja Shrine – Our winding, forested drive down from Gokanosho takes us to Hitoyoshi in the Kuma region, home to 90% of Kumamoto’s shrines. The Shinto Aoi Aso-jinja Shrine was built some 1,200 years ago. Designated a National Treasure, several deities are enshrined here, and the unique, Edo-style architecture features a steep, thatched roof as well as richly-colored and detailed engravings.

Senganen Garden – An hour-and-a-half away in Kagoshima Prefecture, Senganen Garden is the perfect spot to immerse yourself in a traditional Japanese garden with

exquisite ponds, streams, shrines and a bamboo forest. Built in 1658 as the second residence of the wealthy Shimazu feudal clan, Senganen Garden is a World Cultural Heritage Site. Stroll the gardens for a leisurely 3 hours, enjoying the many attractions here, as well as lunch on-site.

Lunch: An exquisite garden setting is just one “course” during the lunch you’ll enjoy at Senganen Garden.

Ibusuki - “Ahhhh!” is universal in any language. In Ibusuki, the renowned sand steam baths will evoke a deliciously soothing sensation. We check in to our beautiful hotel, don comfortable yukata robes, and proceed to the sand bath right in the hotel. Bury your aching bones in a soft, steaming sand bath, and don’t get out till you say, “Ahhhh!”

Satsuma Denshokan Museum – On the very grounds of our hotel, this spectacularly designed museum features a historical exhibit of the local ceramics, unique to the Kagoshima area.

Dinner: We’ll enjoy dinner at our hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel Hakusuikan

Day 6 Wednesday: Kagoshima

Breakfast: Have your breakfast at the hotel. We have a 40-minute drive to Chiran.

Chiran Peace Museum – On a more somber note, we visit a special museum that honors more than 1,000 kamikaze pilots who gave their lives fighting for Japan. Located on an airbase at Chiran, on Satsuma Peninsula of Kagoshima, this is where hundreds of Special Attack or kamikaze sorties launched in the final months of World War II.

Lunch: We'll have tasty, local fare at a nearby restaurant.

Kagoshima City – *Just an hour away, Kagoshima City offers a bounty of local crafts, shopping malls and hot springs to explore.*

Dinner: We'll enjoy dinner at our hotel(own expense)

Accommodation: Shiroyama Kanko Hotel Kagoshima

Day 7 Thursday: Kagoshima - Miyazaki

Breakfast: Enjoy a quick breakfast at the hotel, as we have a long, scenic drive to our legendary destination.

Udo Shrine – *This highly unique, vermilion-laquered complex has a shrine that perches inside a cave with a stunning view of the Pacific Ocean, where waves crash against unusual, pancake-shaped rocks below. Here, legend has it that Princess Toyotama, daughter of the King of the Ocean, gave birth to the father of Japan's first emperor, Jimmu. A turtle-shaped rock said to have carried the princess from the bottom of the ocean to the shrine is the focus of good fortune. Wishes are granted if a lucky stone is tossed into a crevice here, so be sure to try your luck.*

Aoshima Shrine – *A scenic, 25km drive along the stunning coast takes us to Aoshima Shrine near Miyazaki, which is surrounded by a fantastical formation of sandstone waves, called the "Devil's Washboard". Built 1,200 years ago, the entire shrine area was considered sacred ground, off-limits to entry for many centuries.*

Lunch: We'll have lunch in the area before departing for Takachiho, about 2 hours away.

Takachiho - *We depart Miyazaki for Takachiho, a mystical region steeped in Japanese mythology. Known as a "power spot" for its profound religious importance and natural beauty, Takachiho gave birth to the legend of Prince Ninigi, who was sent from the Heavens in 660 B.C. by the Shinto Sun Goddess Amaterasu, to establish the lineage of Japan's rulers. Mystic, ancient shrines and deep gorges surround the Takachiho area.*

Dinner: Enjoyed after checking into our hotel.

Yokagura Sacred Dance – Tonight, we'll enjoy watching "Yokagura", dance rituals that re-enact the colorful legend of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, who, when hiding in a cave, performed a ribald dance that ultimately lured her from the cave and returned her "light" to the world.

Accommodation: Hotel Shikimi

Day 8 Friday: Kagoshima - Kumamoto

Breakfast: Enjoy breakfast at the hotel, then check out before departing for the day's site-seeing.

Takachiho Gorge – Resembling the scales of a dragon, the steep walls of this dramatic, narrow gorge cuts through solid rock of the Gokase River. Scenic trails and waterfalls enchant the senses. The gorge was formed from rapid cooling of an ancient lava flow after one of Mt. Aso's many eruptions, and is designated a National Scenic and Natural Monument.

Tsujunkyo Stone Bridge – We drive an hour away to Yamato-cho, Kumamoto Pref. Tsujunkyo Stone Bridge, a cultural landmark built in 1854, is not only architecturally striking, but is still used to supply irrigation and drinking water to the people of Yabe town.

Lunch: We'll have lunch at a local place.

Kumamoto City – it's an hour's drive to our final destination, Kumamoto City, where we check into our hotel and enjoy an afternoon of shopping. (NEED TO FLESH THIS OUT)

Dinner: Traditional fare at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kumamoto

Day 9 Saturday: Kumamoto -

After breakfast, check out and depart hotel.

End of Tour

Japan Holidays

Photo Images





About Japan Holidays

Our team of travel specialists have expert knowledge on the country which is unsurpassed by many travel companies. They hold a strong bond with Japan having either lived there or visited many times.

Having specialists proficient in the language will make you feel confident in the having your travel plans managed thoroughly.

Japan Holidays is supported by an office in Japan staffed with local experts who are available to assist you in case of need whilst touring the country.

Contact us

Call: + 61 2 6674 4185

Website: <http://japanholidays.com.au/>

Address: P.O. Box 1175, Kingscliff NSW 2487 Australia

Japan Holidays