

SIGNATURE TOUR

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2025 GARDEN AND ART TOUR OF JAPAN

An unforgettable 15-day journey to Japan's most iconic destinations to see the nation's top gardens and experience a stunning selection of Japanese art.

"I would be very happy to recommend Journey to the East Tour company to anyone wanting a small group tour with superb variety in art, gardens, food and Japanese experiences. Terrific trip."

– Bronwyn Chapman

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DURATION

15 days

📖

THEME

Garden & Art Tours

👥

GROUP SIZE

Min 2 – Max 8

☰

TOP TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



Most awarded Japanese gardens like Kenroku-en and Koraku-en

Learn the breath and depth of great Japanese gardens and their styles from your expert guides



Overnight on Naoshima

Be inspired by the contemporary art works on the magical Naoshima Island



Internationally acclaimed art museums such as Adachi Art Museum and Miho Museum

Adachi Museum of Art was awarded best Japanese garden for 17 consecutive years

Cultural experiences such as tea ceremony

Join in hands-on cultural experiences of bonsai workshop and tea ceremony



Ancient capital Kyoto

Be charmed by the ever so popular Japanese capital Kyoto and its iconic sites such as Golden Pavilion



Mt Fuji in Hakone

Enjoy the view of Mount Fuji from the town of Hakone and enjoy onsen hot spring

SEE FULL TOUR ITINERARY

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2025 Garden and Art Tour of Japan visits a selection of the wonderful Japanese gardens and international standard art museums. The 15-day tour will give you a great grounding of Japan, as you visit Tokyo, Hakone, Kanazawa, Okayama, Kurashiki, Bizen, Naoshima and Kyoto on your way to exploring the world of garden and art both traditional and contemporary. The tour also includes a variety of accommodation and food styles along with excellent cultural experiences which are the main attractions of people visiting Japan.

The tours take place in May and October – ideal times of year to visit Japan. The weather is typically warm and sunny, and the gardens are at their best. The tours are not designed specifically for horticulturists or garden experts (though always welcome), but rather for general lovers of gardens and art who want to explore Japan and learn more about its deeply fascinating culture.

*From 2025 all our 8-member Small Group Tours will have guaranteed departure from 2 guests.

ITINERARY

DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY

▼ Day 1: Arrival in Tokyo

Welcome to Japan! On arrival at **Narita or Haneda International Airport**, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by public transport.

Today is an arrival day for this small group journey and no group program is scheduled. Your hotel is located right in the middle of Tokyo near the glitzy **Ginza**. Why not take a stroll, relax and be ready to start the first full day of your **2025 Garden and Art Tour of Japan**.

*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. We can try arranging your additional nights accommodation in the same room as the tour.

Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)

No meals

▼ Day 2: Tokyo and Omiya





After meeting your guide and fellow travelers at hotel lobby, your Japanese garden and art adventure starts.

This morning, you will firstly visit **Hamarikyu Garden**, Tokyo's pre-eminent Japanese garden. It was built by the ruling Tokugawa family during the Edo era in the 17th century, and remodeled as a public garden and opened to the public in 1946. There are many points of interest including an impressive 300-year-old pine tree very carefully pruned over the centuries into an impressive weeping expanse.

After strolling the relaxing garden, you catch a suburban train northwest, to arrive at suburb of Omiya in Greater Tokyo. Visiting an outer suburb away from the central Tokyo is an interesting experience in itself seeing how ordinary Japanese people live.

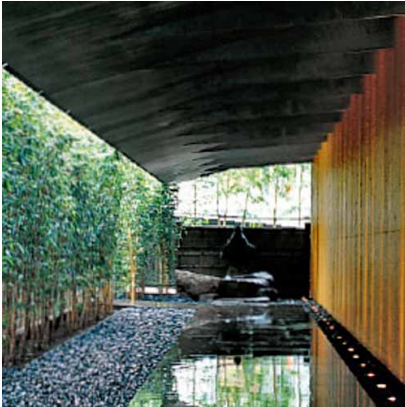
After the visit to the **Omiya Bonsai Museum**, an opportunity opens up where you can learn more about the art of bonsai, the care and preservation of these beautifully manicured miniature trees, and creating your own bonsai in the **friendly bonsai workshop**. (*You can't take it home for biosecurity reasons, but the skills are yours to keep.)

Tonight's **"Welcome to Japan" dinner** is at a modern Japanese restaurant with a great night view of Tokyo.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 3: Tokyo



On the second day of Tokyo, you will see a mix of old and modern-day Japan. The highlights include;

- Visiting **Meiji Jingu Shrine**, historically significant and a magnificent shrine in the thick forest, most surprising in the middle of busy Tokyo,
- Stroll along **Omotesando** avenue, arguably the most fashionable street in Japan with cutting-edge architecture and the top brands of the world,
- Wander through **Ota Memorial Museum** which specialises in ukiyo-e (wood print) art, and
- Amble through the wonderful **Nezu Museum of Art**, designed by Kengo Kuma, where you can enjoy the contemplative Japanese garden and take in one of the finest collections of Japanese and East-Asian pre-modern art.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 4: Hakone



Start with a ride on Japan's impressive **shinkansen**, the bullet train, for a lovely overnight trip to **Hakone**, a scenic hot springs resort area located in the mountains near **Mt Fuji**.

With its proximity to Tokyo, Hakone has been a popular destination for Tokyoites seeking rest and rejuvenation for centuries. You tour the general Hakone region by private vehicle, travelling through the **Izu-Hakone National Park** and, depending on the weather, catching glimpses of Mt Fuji up close. Hakone has some outstanding world-class museums and galleries. You will firstly visit the **Okada Museum of Art**. It is a private art museum, the largest in Hakone by floor area, exhibiting Japanese paintings, oriental ceramics, Asian art and religious art. As well as the art works, enjoy the beautiful garden and natural surrounding. The next stop is the **Hakone Open-Air Museum** with its amazing outdoor sculptures from the likes of Henry Moore and Rodin set against a spectacular backdrop of maple and cherry trees. You will also **cruise** on a 'Viking ship' on **Lake Ashi**, and take a ropeway over the **Owakudani** to witness the geothermal activity below which is the source of healing in hot spring spa baths.

Tonight you will stay at one of Hakone’s premiere **traditional ryokan** with a beautiful garden. Featuring **onsen hot spring mineral baths**, you’ll experience Japan’s onsen culture firsthand and understand why an onsen visit remains one of the top past-times of the Japanese.

The ryokan will serve a **kaiseki multi-course banquet** of beautifully presented fresh local produce for dinner.

 **Hakone (Takumi no Yado Yoshimatsu or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

▼ Day 5: Hakone



This morning you will enjoy a relaxing breakfast at your ryokan before embarking on another day in Hakone. While you are here, you will visit **Narukawa Art Museum**, which is dedicated to the Japanese style paintings (Nihonga).

After lunch, you will get back on shinkansen heading back to Tokyo. This evening is free for you to enjoy the last night in this mega city.

 **Tokyo (Park Hotel Tokyo or similar)**

 **Breakfast**

▼ Day 6: Kanazawa



Another shinkansen ride will take you to the city of **Kanazawa** on the shores of the Japan Sea. Kanazawa is commonly known as “Little Kyoto” and is home to many traditional Japanese arts and cultures, history from the samurai era and the outstanding **Kenrokuen Japanese Garden**. Today you will visit among others;

- Kenrokuen Garden, originally designed as a castle garden dating back to the 17th century and regarded as one of the three great gardens of Japan,
- A traditional tea house in a beautiful Japanese garden where you experience 'The Way of Tea' (commonly known as tea ceremony in English), one of the most well-known aspects of Japanese culture.

After briefly resting back at your hotel, you will sample wagyu beef at a teppanyaki restaurant for dinner tonight.

 **Kanazawa (Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



▼ Day 7: Kanazawa



This morning you will stroll around the **Nagamachi samurai resident district** then move onto the **21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art**, noteworthy for the unusual glass cylinder structure which envelopes the building to reduce its environmental footprint designed by SANAA. Your guide will continue taking you on a backstreet walk of Kanazawa art district exploring some prominent small art galleries including **D.T. Suzuki Museum**.

The rest of the day is free. You can continue your exploration of Kanazawa checking out many craft shops offering exquisite kimono, gilded lacquerware and local sake products. You may like to visit the **Higashi Geisha District**, a well-preserved area of narrow streets. In days gone by, immaculately presented geisha would have entertained wealthy patrons in slatted wooden tea houses. Here you can visit the **Gold-leaf Museum**, the Kanazawa’s number one traditional craft.

The evening is also free tonight. We are more than happy to make dinner recommendations.

 **Kanazawa (Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast**

▼ Day 8: Okayama and Kurashiki



After a couple of days in Kanazawa, you head for **Kurashiki**, which was a prosperous trading town during the feudal era.

On the way, you stop at **Okayama**, for a guided tour of the magnificent **Koraku-en Garden**, another one of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan. Initially completed in 1700, Koraku-en is prized for being a great example of the “scenic promenade” garden style, which reveals a new view to the visitor on every turn along its meandering path.

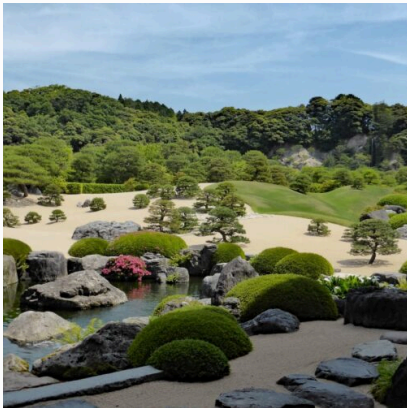
Finally, you will arrive at Kurashiki, your base for the next two days. It is delightfully historic and picturesque town to walk around. It has maintained its charming streetscape of traditional black-and-white storehouses, merchant residences and canals lined with willow trees. Here you visit the **Ohara Museum of Art**, with a superb collection of ceramics, paintings and antiquities from Japan, China and other ancient civilizations.

You will have a French style dinner at your hotel tonight.

 **Kurashiki (Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**



▼ Day 9: Yasugi (Adachi Museum)



Today you travel to Yasugi, a rural town on the western coast of Japan’s main island, to visit the garden at the **Adachi Museum of Art**. This garden has been nominated Japan’s most popular garden for 17 consecutive years. Designed in the “borrowed scenery” style, the mountainous backdrop to this extensive garden makes it appear that the mountains are a seamless part of the garden itself.

You will also visit the **Photography Museum** of an award-winning photographer, **Shoji Ueda**.

You return to Kurashiki to have a free evening.

-  **Kurashiki (Kurashiki Royal Art Hotel or similar)**
-  **Breakfast**

▼ Day 10: Bizen and Naoshima





A minivan ride will take you to the small regional town of **Imbe**, which has been producing **Bizen** ceramic for some 1,000 years. Bizen-ware is still highly prized among pottery enthusiasts both in Japan and overseas. Today you will;

- Engage first hand with one of Imbe’s most awarded potters in his own studio and private garden,
- Visit the ancient 'climbing' kilns, and
- Wander through the galleries and craft shops.

Potentially the biggest surprise of your trip awaits this afternoon. You hop on a ferry across Seto Inland Sea to an art island, **Naoshima**. This afternoon, you spend time at **Ando Tadao Museum** and the **House Project**.

Tonight, you stay at a sublime Japanese style ryokan on the island and experience Japanese hospitality at its best!

-  **Naoshima (Roka or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 11: Naoshima



Once home to just a few remote fishing villages, **Naoshima** is now known as the "Art Island" in Japan’s magical Seto Inland Sea.

Thanks to the Benesse Corporation and the visionary Naoshima Art Project, Naoshima has been transformed into a cutting-edge contemporary art island and it is visited by leading architects and artists from all over the world. Today after a relaxing breakfast at your ryokan you;

- Spend time on the island visiting **Valley Gallery, Chichu Museum, Lee Ufan Museum, and Benesse House Museum** and its surrounding monuments,
- Also enjoy the laid-back atmosphere and stunning natural scenery of the Seto Inland Sea,

This evening you will cross back to the mainland, and take a shinkansen to your final destination, **Kyoto**.

-  **Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ Day 12: Kyoto





With 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (at last count!), **Kyoto** is the historical heart of Japan’s culture and the guardian of many of its ancient traditions. Originally made capital way back in 794, present-day Kyoto offers an incredible range of contemplative gardens often associated with the ancient temples and shrines.

While Kyoto has many iconic sites, our walking guided tour today will focus on hidden treasures not often found in a guide book. You will visit a select temple garden, small galleries of local artists, and walk along the ever so attractive backstreets of Kyoto.

In the afternoon you will visit **Kiyomizu Temple** at the end of Gojo slope, a street filled with Kyoto style ceramic shops.

Tonight is free for you to wonder around the atmospheric city of Kyoto.

-  **Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Lunch**

▼ Day 13: Arashiyama



Today you explore Kyoto's western suburb, Arashiyama. At Arashiyama you will;

- Observe superb examples of “stroll” style Japanese gardens at **Tenryuji Temple**,
- Wander through the bamboo grove, famous for its extensive forest of thick bamboo stands and ethereal light,
- Visit the historic villa of **Okochi Sanso**, built on a hill-side, it offers magnificent views of Kyoto. The sprawling gardens, villa and tea house showcase the Japanese garden aesthetic at its very best.
- Lunch is a classic lunch of **tofu**, a local specialty with roots in Kyoto’s Buddhist vegetarian past,
- Stop at **Kinkakuji Temple**, better known as **Golden Pavilion**. The temple is a stunning three-storied pavilion covered in dazzling gold leaf.

Another free evening for you to try endless choice of restaurants in Kyoto tonight.

-  **Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar)**
-  **Breakfast, Lunch**

▼ Day 14: Shigaraki (Miho Museum)



This is another very special day. Past guests have said this visit ranks as one of the most impressive days of the tour.

Today you visit the stunning **Miho Museum**. Here you can experience a thorough immersion into the world of art, architecture and landscape design.



Renowned architect **I.M. Pei** designed this museum with much of the site built into a forested hillside. Miho was built to house an extensive private collection of some 2,000 antiquities from ancient civilizations.

The contrast of the glass and steel structure of the museum’s roof against the surrounding natural environment is spectacular. It is this seamless integration of the man-made and the natural which creates today's indelible memory.

Back in Kyoto, you will have some free time this afternoon.

Tonight you will gather one more time for a final meal. Chat about your memories of the tour at a contemporary Kyoto cuisine restaurant which represents the complexity of this fascinating old capital.

 **Kyoto (Cross Hotel Kyoto or similar)**

 **Breakfast, Dinner**

▼ **Day 15: Bon Voyage in Kyoto**

This tour is a feedback feature from 2025 Garden and Art Tour of Japan, available for...



DATES & PRICES

2025 Garden and Art Tour of Japan

TOUR CODE	STARTS	DEPARTS FROM	AVAILABLE PLACES (?)	CURRENCY	PP TWIN SHARE	SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (?)		
GGA-25a	May 11, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	10,550	2,500	ASK A QUESTION	BOOK NOW
GGA-25c	Oct 12, 2025	Tokyo	Available	AUD\$	10,550	2,500	ASK A QUESTION	BOOK NOW

Choose a different currency at the very top right of the page.





INCLUSIONS

Each guest is personally looked after with one-on-one interactions with our hand-picked, expert tour guides. As part of your investment, this tour includes:

- ✓ First-class wisdom and higher standard of individual care and attention
- ✓ 14 nights’ accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns)
- ✓ All breakfasts
- ✓ 6 lunches (7 free choice lunches)
- ✓ 8 dinners (5 free choice dinners)
- ✓ Airport meet & greet on arrival
- ✓ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival
- ✓ All local transport (train and private minivans)
- ✓ Pre-loaded Suica card
- ✓ Expert English speaking tour guides (locally licensed)
- ✓ Cultural activities and entry fees included in itinerary
- ✓ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person)

DISCLAIMER: Unless otherwise stated, this tour does not include the costs of international and domestic airfares, transfers on the last day, travel insurance, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, transport during free time, personal expenses (laundry, internet, telephone, coin lockers etc.) and Visa (if required).

Higashi Chaya District in Kanazawa



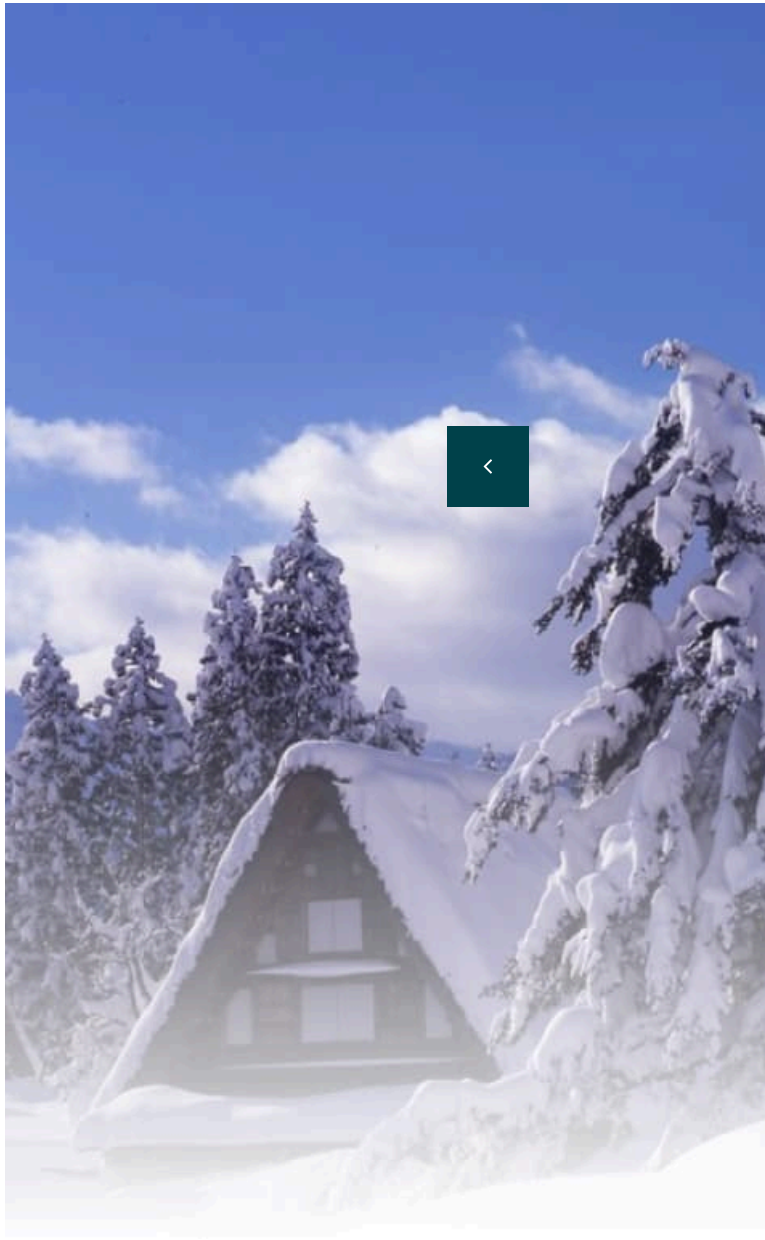
WHO THIS JAPAN TOUR IS FOR...

This is a perfect tour for people who:

- ▶ Want to visit the best **Japanese gardens** and **art museums** both traditional and contemporary
- ▶ Wish to cover the **iconic sites** of popular destinations like Tokyo, Hakone, Kanazawa, Kyoto in 15 days
- ▶ Enjoy strolling through **backstreets** with your guide and find **hidden gems** avoiding the tourist traps
- ▶ Join a superbly-organised tour packed with **visits and cultural experiences** as well as some free time
- ▶ Be up-close and **interact with locals** through public transport



- Experience a **variety in style**, and typically 4 star **boutique accommodation** with private bathroom including traditional Japanese ryokan



REVIEWS

A specialist company using local guides and the small size of the group made this holiday!

★★★★★

Trip date: May 2023

Terence Watton - UK

Have a question about this tour? Get in touch with our staff directly.

CONTACT US

INFORMATION

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BLOG

- Choosing the right tour of Japan
- Northern Kansai Region of Japan
- Top 5 unusual things you can find in Japan
- Japanese home cooking recipes Vol.5 – Okonomiyaki
- Unique accommodation in Japan

CONTACT US

+61 7 3368 1966

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Haig Road, Auchenflower 4066 Queensland Australia

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