INSIDER’S JAPAN

2016

With an Optional Post-Tour Extension:
Hiroshima: City of Peace

Itinerary and Accommodations

JPN/JPH: Updated September 2015
DAY 1: Depart the U.S. for Tokyo, Japan

Today you’ll depart for Tokyo, Japan.

DAY 2: Arrive Tokyo

After arriving in Japan’s financial, commercial, and political capital this evening, we transfer to our hotel where we meet our fellow travelers and have a briefing about the journey ahead with our Odysseys Unlimited Tour Director (because of multiple arrivals into Tokyo, your briefing may be held the next morning). Dinner this evening is on your own.

Accommodations: Park Hotel Tokyo

DAY 3: Tokyo

Tokyo is a vast metropolis compromising 23 wards and 26 cities with a population of over 13 million residents, and 844 square miles. It is also the center of the Greater Tokyo Area, which is, with a population of more than 35 million, the most populous metropolitan area in the world. Amazingly, it has endured earthquakes, fires, and the U.S. air raids of World War II to emerge as one of the world’s leading cities. Tokyo has managed to successfully merge the old and the new to become a fascinating and cosmopolitan place. We begin our half-day excursion in Ancient Tokyo at the famed Meiji Shrine, a peaceful enclave of temples and gardens dedicated to late 19th-century Emperor Meiji and his wife. Built in traditional Shinto style with low wooden buildings surrounded by square courtyards, the shrine is one of Tokyo’s most popular attractions. Also on today’s itinerary is the Asakusa Kannon Temple, which contains a golden image of the Buddhist Kannon, goddess of mercy. According to legend, two fishermen dragged the statue from the sea in 628 ... but visitors cannot see it since it is hidden from the public. However, you can make your way to the front of the temple to bathe yourself in smoke from the incense cauldron; it is said that the smoke brings good health. Then we have time to explore the Nakamise Shopping arcade outside the temple, filled with stalls selling local dishes, Buddhist trinkets, and popular souvenirs.

We return to our hotel mid-day; the afternoon is at leisure for independent exploration – and options certainly abound. Your tour director will be happy to offer suggestions. Tonight we enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodations: Park Hotel Tokyo
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Tokyo

Today we visit the Imperial Palace District, surrounded by moats and ramparts and home of the Imperial Family. Called Kokyo, the huge complex dates to the 15th century, when territorial disputes required
massive fortifications and complex societal norms demanded elaborate palaces to reflect the high positions of the feudal lords. When completed, the Imperial Palace was the largest district in the world. From the lovely East and Outer gardens, we’ll see the ruins of the massive moat and walls that remain. Next, we enter the gallery of one of Japan’s preeminent calligraphers, Koshun Masunaga, where we learn about this ancient art and browse the collection. Then we take a motorcoach tour of Ginza, Tokyo’s famed shopping, dining, and entertainment district boasting the most expensive real estate in all of Japan. After lunch on your own, the remainder of the day is at leisure to visit some of Ginza’s department stores, boutiques, or galleries; or to set off in a new direction. Tokyo boasts a myriad of attractions and activities to suit every taste: world-class museums, temples, shrines, kabuki theatre, shopping, dining. Some special experiences include wandering the back streets of Tsukiji, where scores of fishmongers, sushi bars, small shops, and markets hold sway; and visiting Ueno Park in the heart of the city, renowned for its April cherry blossoms and November foliage. You can visit the Ueno Zoo, the first of its kind in Japan, to see the playful pandas; or admire the world’s largest collection of Japanese art in the Tokyo National Museum. For a glimpse of modern-day Japan, you might wish to visit Shinjuku, Tokyo’s bustling commercial center with enormous skyscrapers, department stores, discount shopping arcades, and stand-up-and-eat noodle stands. Dinner today is on your own.

Accommodations: Park Hotel Tokyo
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Tokyo/Mt. Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park/Hakone

We travel by motorcoach today to Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, home to one of the most photographed sights in Japan, if not the world: almost perfectly symmetrical Mt. Fuji, standing regally at 12,388 feet high in the park’s midst. We embark on a leisurely boat ride on Ashi Lake, where we can take in scenes of the whole park, and with luck, see Mt. Fuji. For a different perspective, we then take a motorcoach ride to the “fifth station” of Mount Fuji, which is the embarkation point for those climbers brave enough to attempt the summit – and for us, weather permitting, it’s our perch for striking panoramic views. A dormant volcano, Fuji-san, as it is known to the Japanese, last erupted in 1707 and the resulting ash reached all the way to Tokyo where it actually covered buildings. The mountain’s majesty is breathtaking, as writers and artists have attested for centuries. Leaving the park we continue on to the town of Hakone and our traditional ryokan lodgings for the night – and a special night it will be indeed. Upon arrival at our intimate inn, we’ll be shown to our Japanese-style rooms where we’ll remove our shoes before entering. Then we will savor a traditional tea, followed by a dinner featuring dishes using fresh local ingredients. Tonight we sleep peacefully on a futon in a room of serene, minimalist Japanese design.

Please note: In addition to your one piece of checked luggage, you also will need to bring along a smaller, overnight carry-on bag for your overnight stay at the ryokan. This bag should have wheels as you will embark and disembark the train with it and take it through the stations. You will meet your original luggage upon arrival at the Hida Hotel Plaza in Takayama.

Accommodations: Aura Tachibana (ryokan)
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Suwa/Takayama

Our journey continues as we travel via bullet train and Wide View Hida express to the Hida Mountain town of Takayama, considered one of Japan’s most attractive settings with its 16th-century castle, a beautifully preserved Old Town, and historic buildings dating to the Edo period of 1600 to 1868. Before we leave, you will have the option buy a bento box lunch, a food box packed with Japanese specialties which will
entice both your eyes and taste buds. Our explorations here center on three narrow streets in the San-machi-suji district, where in feudal times, wealthy merchants lived amidst the authentically preserved small inns, teahouses, peaceful temples, and sake breweries that we see here (some of which have operated for centuries). During our tour we enjoy a sake tasting then have time on our own to visit some of the local shops that sell the region’s unique lacquer ware (shunkeinuri) and carvings of yew wood. We dine tonight at our hotel.

Accommodations:  Hida Hotel Plaza  
Meals:  Breakfast, Dinner

**DAY 7: Takayama/Shirakawago/Kanazawa**

We pay an early morning visit to Takayama’s centuries-old Miyagawa Morning Market, where stalls selling everything from fresh fruit, vegetables, and flowers to pickles, crafts, and fish line the streets leading to the river. Then we depart for Shirakawago Gassho-zukuri Village, a UNESCO World Heritage site comprising thatched-roof homes relocated from villages that were razed for the construction of a dam. In addition to its status as a World Heritage site, the village also is a vibrant community whose residents work together to preserve the Gassho-style architectural style unique to this region: wooden houses with steep thatched roofs made to withstand heavy snow. After lunch together, we continue on to the Miboro Dam, Japan’s first and largest dam built with “rock-fill technology” using only stones and clay. Late this afternoon we reach Kanazawa, an alluring city that survived the ravages of World War II because of its out-of-the-way location between the mountains and the Sea of Japan. Though somewhat off the beaten tourist path, Kanazawa is prized among Japanese as the country’s best-preserved Edo-period city (along with Takayama). Dinner tonight is on our own in this city known for its Kaga, or traditional cuisine (particularly sushi, and sashimi).

Accommodations:  Hotel Nikko Kanazawa  
Meals:  Breakfast, Lunch

**DAY 8: Kanazawa**

Our full day of touring this culturally-rich city includes renowned Kenrokuen Garden, a national landmark whose origins date to 1676. One of Japan’s three finest traditional gardens, Kenrokuen (Garden of Six Attributes) represents the six qualities required for the perfect garden: extensiveness, factitiousness (manmade), antiquity, water, wide prospect, and quiet seclusion. Its trees, ponds, waterfalls, and flowers stretch over grounds of 25 acres. We also view Ishikawa Gate, the only remaining section of the town’s original castle; Higashi Chaya-gai teahouse district; and the Higashi-Chayamach geisha area of tall, narrow houses. We tour the Hakukokan Gold Leaf Museum, which celebrates the art and craft of gold leaf technology and houses a collection dating to the late 16th century. A center of gold leaf craft, Kanazawa produced the gold leaf covering Kyoto’s Golden Pavilion that we’ll see on Day 10. Our last stop is the Nagamachi Samurai district, where the ruling family’s samurai warriors lived on narrow streets protected by tile-roofed earthen walls. We dine tonight at a local restaurant.

Accommodations:  Hotel Nikko Kanazawa  
Meals:  Breakfast, Dinner
DAY 9: Kanazawa/Kyoto

This morning we board the train for the two-hour journey south to Kyoto, Japan’s Imperial Capital for a millennium and now the country’s cultural and artistic capital. A true gem with more than 1,600 temples, hundreds of shrines, three imperial palaces, artful gardens, and well-preserved wooden architecture, Kyoto embodies Japan’s rich culture and complex history. The art of kabuki theatre, as well as Japanese gardens, traditional cuisine, and superb crafts thrive here, attracting legions of visitors and Japanese alike. Upon arrival, we visit two centers of culture. First, we see Kyoto National Museum, which comprises three exhibition halls displaying ancient Asian art, sutras (texts), and scrolls. Then we visit Unrakugama Pottery, a family-owned pottery house producing fine handmade ceramics and earthenware. We dine tonight at our hotel.

Accommodations: ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10: Kyoto

Today’s full-day tour reveals the highlights of Kyoto, Japan’s capital from 794 to 1868 that was spared destruction during World War II. We begin at 16th-century Ryoan-ji Temple (ca. 1540), where we see the dry garden of sand and rocks (kare-sansui), a marvel of classic Japanese design. The simplicity of its 15 rocks belies a complex symbolism which its designer never revealed – but whatever the meaning, we’re sure to feel the calm that the garden is meant to instill. Our next stop is Kinkaku-ji, the lakeside Temple of the Golden Pavilion originally constructed in the 14th century as a retirement villa and later converted to a temple. Burned to the ground by a fanatic in 1950, the temple has been entirely reconstructed following the original design, and is covered in gold leaf from Kanazawa all the way up to the upper floors. Its setting on pillars suspended over the water makes it one of Kyoto’s most inspired – and inspiring – sights. Then we visit the 17th-century Nijo-jo, the medieval castle of the first Tokugawa Shogun, containing “nightingale” floors that squeak to signal the presence of intruders. We end this full day at Kodaiji Temple to attend a tea ceremony. Both a state of mind (calm and content) and performance art prizing ritual and grace above all, the traditional tea ceremony to this day represents the principles of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility encouraged by Master Sen no Rikyu, who perfected the ritual Zen practice when tea first was brought to Japan from China in the 16th century. Dinner tonight is on your own.

Accommodations: ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11: Kyoto

Today is free to explore Kyoto as you wish, or to join in an optional excursion (at additional cost) to the ancient city of Nara which utilizes public transportation. Japan’s first capital (from 710 to 784), Nara’s fall from power ironically spared it the ravages of war over the centuries, thus preserving its precious wooden architecture. Today the city’s historic temples and shrines count among the oldest wooden buildings in the world and are designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, along with the surrounding primeval forest. Our optional tour features several of the most important buildings, including magnificent Todai-ji, a Buddhist temple dating to 752 with a huge Buddha statue; the Shinto Kasuga Shrine, with 2,000 stone lanterns; and sacred deer that run free. (Please note this optional excursion requires long periods of walking).

If you choose to stay and explore Kyoto on your own, options abound in this ancient city of grace and beauty. Perhaps you’ll shop for exquisite Japanese crafts; the city is widely known for its goods of exceptional
artistry including Kyo pottery, hand-painted silks, lacquer ware, display dolls, woodblock prints, fans, umbrellas, Noh masks, lanterns, and more. Or you may wish to visit any number of temples, gardens, or shrines – such as Heian Shrine, built in 1895 and dedicated to the first and last emperors of Kyoto. Though the buildings here are replicas of the 9th-century originals, they still evoke the reverence and dignity of the imperial court. Kiyomizu Temple, whose sacred waters are believed to bring good health, boasts a spectacular setting on a steep hillside with breathtaking views of the city and valley below. This is one of Kyoto’s most popular temples, a 17th-century reconstruction of the original built in 778. Lunch and dinner today are on your own – an opportunity to try some of the traditional Japanese cuisine for which the city is known.

Accommodations: ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12: Kyoto

We see the sights today from a slightly different perspective as we enjoy a cycling tour through Kyoto Imperial Park where the Imperial Palace and its garden, Kyoto-gyoen, are located. Home of the Imperial family until the capital moved to Tokyo in 1868, the current Imperial Palace dates from 1855. We’ll also visit the Heian Jingu, a shrine with a Chinese-inspired bridge and beautiful Japanese gardens built to commemorate the 1,100th anniversary of Kyoto, and Nishiki Market via bicycle. (If you would prefer not to participate in the cycling, your Tour Director will arrange for alternate activities).

From here we visit Gion, the most famous of Kyoto’s several geisha districts with its traditional tall wooden merchants’ homes (as in Kanazawa, property owners historically were taxed on street frontage, so they built tall rather than wide). Then we encounter the city’s traditional culture as we stroll through lively Nishiki Market, where shop owners sell a colorful variety of local dishes, fish, fruits, vegetables, crafts, and other wares.

This afternoon is at leisure; you may wish to visit Ginkaku-ji, the Temple of the Silver Pavilion with its traditional gardens of raked white sand, or Nishi Hoganji, one of the head temples of Pure Land Buddhism. Tonight we toast our Japan adventure over a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodations: ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 13: Depart Kyoto for U.S.

Late this morning we travel by motorcoach to Osaka’s Kansai International Airport, where we board our return flight to San Francisco and there connect with our flights onward.

Meals: Breakfast

PLEASE NOTE

We will do our best to adhere to our printed itinerary. Occasionally, though, unexpected obstacles – or opportunities – may arise that will force us to deviate from the itinerary as written. We would ask you to be open-minded and flexible should we vary the itinerary slightly. In addition, please note that airline schedules are subject to change. We will provide you with updated flight information closer to your departure.
In keeping with Japanese social etiquette, you will often be required to remove your shoes when entering temples, shrines, and other buildings. Clean socks will serve you well (you may wish to designate a pair or two as your “temple socks”), and you should pack a pair of shoes that you can easily remove and put back on.

For Land Only Guests

If you choose to purchase Odysseys Unlimited’s **Insider’s Japan** tour as “land only,” you will be making your own international air arrangements and will join the tour at the first hotel.

While airport transfers and luggage handling at the arrival and departure airports are not included when you purchase a tour as land only, you are welcome to join our motorcoach transfer to the hotel. This service will be provided to you on a complimentary basis.

To join in the transfer, you must be at the Tokyo airport (Narita) concurrent with the group of arriving Odysseys Unlimited guests. Look for our representative holding an Odysseys Unlimited sign and you will be directed to the motorcoach. Please note that you must be present when the coach is preparing to leave.

For **Insider’s Japan**, the currently scheduled flight is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Depart</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Airline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>San Francisco (SFO)</td>
<td>11:25 a.m.</td>
<td>United Airlines flight # 837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Narita</td>
<td>2:10 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please remember that all flights and schedules are subject to change.

If you are unable to join Odysseys’ motorcoach transfer to the Park Hotel Tokyo, following are suggestions for making the transfer on your own. You can take a taxi at a cost of approximately $300US (at time of printing) – but the fare varies with traffic conditions. Or you can take the Airport Limousine Bus (www.limousinebus.co.jp), stationed just outside of both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 at a cost of $30US per person (at time of printing). The bus stops at several downtown Tokyo hotels, including the Park Hotel Tokyo. Please note that the Park Hotel Tokyo does not have an airport shuttle.

Additionally, upon the tour’s completion, you are welcome to join the group transfer to the airport for your flight home.
DAY 13: Kyoto/Hiroshima/Miyajima Island

Situated on the Ota River delta and close to Hiroshima Bay, Hiroshima has been an important trading center and strategic military point since the late 16th century. The Japanese military recognized the city’s prime location and set up a logistics base there that would last until 1945 – when the United States military dropped the first atomic bomb ever to be used during military action. The now infamous attack leveled Hiroshima, crippled Japan, and led the Japanese to surrender just six days later. The Japanese parliament later rebuilt the city from the ashes of its total devastation. We spend two days exploring this reconstructed “City of Peace.”

This morning we leave Kyoto by express train for Hiroshima. Upon arrival at JR Hiroshima Station, we embark on a half-day city tour that includes Peace Memorial Park, home to several memorials dedicated to those that perished during the bombing; and Peace Memorial Museum, displaying photos and belongings left behind by victims of the attacks. This evening is free, with dinner on your own in Hiroshima. You may wish to try okonomiyaki, a dish of cabbage, noodles, and egg, fried with meat, cheese, and seafood, for which Hiroshima is renowned.

Please note: In addition to your one piece of checked luggage, you also will need to bring along a smaller, overnight carry-on bag to take with you on the Hiroshima extension (you can use the same overnight bag you use for the overnight stay at the ryokan on Day 5). This bag should have wheels as you will embark and disembark the train with it and take it through the stations. Your original luggage will be transferred to Osaka’s Kansai International Airport where you will meet it prior to your return to the United States.

Accommodations: Hotel Granvia Hiroshima
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14: Miyajima Island

This morning we transfer by local train to Miyajimaguchi. There we board a ferry to Miyajima Island, a sacred location in the Shinto religion. For many centuries, it was illegal for anyone to inhabit this sacred ground. Legend has it that the first Shinto shrine was built here during the 6th century in honor of the goddess of the ocean, the daughter of the goddess who created Japan itself. We tour the island and visit Itsukushima Shrine, built towards the end of the 12th century and renowned for its red gate. This shrine stands on piers above the water in order for visitors to enter by boat without disturbing the land below. We also take a gondola ride on the Mount Misen Ropeway, which affords stunning 360-degree views of the island and Hiroshima Bay. Then we return to Hiroshima, where you have the afternoon at leisure to further explore the “City of Peace” as you wish. Options include Hiroshima Castle, built in 1591; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, the first Japanese public art museum to specialize in contemporary art; Hijiyama Park, overlooking the city of Hiroshima; or Hondori Street located in downtown Hiroshima, a bustling street lined with shops and restaurants (one of which may be ideal for dinner on your own this evening).

Accommodations: Hotel Granvia Hiroshima
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
DAY 15: Hiroshima/Osaka/Depart for U.S.

After breakfast we take a short walk to JR Hiroshima Station where we board an express train to Osaka. We then transfer via a second express train to Osaka’s Kansai International Airport; your luggage will be waiting for you there. You then connect with your return flight to the United States.

*Meals:* Breakfast

**PLEASE NOTE**

We will do our best to adhere to our printed itinerary. Occasionally, though, unexpected obstacles – or opportunities – may arise that will force us to deviate from the itinerary as written. We would ask you to be open-minded and flexible should we vary the itinerary slightly. In addition, please note that airline schedules are subject to change. We will provide you with updated flight information closer to your departure.
INSIDER’S JAPAN 2016
Accommodations

Park Hotel Tokyo

Shiodome Media Tower
1-7-1 Higashi Shimbashi, Minato-ku
Tokyo 105-7227
Japan
Phone: 011-81-36-252-1111
Fax: 011-81-36-252-1001
www.parkhoteltokyo.com

Built in 2003, this 273-room hotel in Tokyo’s Shiodome culture and business district offers a peaceful oasis from the busy city. Hotel facilities and amenities include several restaurants, bars, and lounges; a salon, flower shop, and gift shop; laundry and dry cleaning services; internet access; and professional “pillow fitters” to help guests achieve a restful night’s sleep. Serenely decorated guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, air-conditioning, in-room safe, mini-bar, TV, and phone.

Aura Tachibana (ryokan)

574 Yumoto, Ashigarashimo-gun
Hakone-machi 250-0311
Japan
Phone: 011-81-0460-85-5541
http://www.aura-tachibana.com/

Located in the small hot springs resort of Hakone, the Aura Tachibana offers a traditional Japanese-style lodging experience. Guests can enjoy a dip in the public outdoor onsen bath; dine upon fresh, local Japanese food at dinner; and experience sleeping on a futon in a Japanese-style room with private bathroom. Per Japanese tradition, shoes must be removed in bedrooms at this ryokan.
Hida Hotel Plaza

60 Hanaoka-cho 2-chome
Takayama, Gifu 506-0009
Japan
Phone: 011-81-57-733-4600
Fax: 011-81-57-733-4602
www.hida-hotelplaza.co.jp

Centrally located near the railway station and a five-minute walk from Miyagawa Morning Market, the 232-room Hida Hotel Plaza features several restaurants, lounges, and a sake bar; beauty salon; gift shop; indoor swimming pool, spa, and sauna; internet access; laundry and dry cleaning services; and a roof-top pool with commanding views of the northern Japanese Alps.  Air-conditioned guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, refrigerator, TV, and phone.

Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

2-15-1 Hon-machi
Kanazawa-shi, Ishikawa 920-0853
Japan
Phone: 011-81-76-234-1111
Fax: 011-81-76-234-8802
www.hnkanazawa.jp

Conveniently located within walking distance of some of Kanazawa’s most popular sights, the 254-room Nikko Kanazawa presents a refined European atmosphere.  Hotel amenities include several restaurants, lounges, and bars; internet access; laundry and dry cleaning services; and sauna and Jacuzzi.  Air-conditioned guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, mini-bar, tea- and coffee-making facilities, TV, and phone.

ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel (formerly ANA Kyoto Hotel)

Nijojo-Mae, Horikawa-Dori
Nakagyu-Ku
Kyoto, Kyoto 604-0055
Japan
Phone: 011-81-75-231-1155
Fax: 011-81-75-231-5333
www.anacpkyoto.com

Though it features a contemporary exterior design, the ANA Crowne Plaza Kyoto Hotel offers guests traditional Japanese hospitality within.  The 298-room hotel, well located across from Nijo Castle, has several restaurants and a bar; a health club with indoor pool, spa tub, and sauna; internet access; laundry and dry cleaning services; beauty salon; and gift shop.  Air-conditioned guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, in-room safe; mini-bar, TV, and phone.
Hotel Granvia Hiroshima

1-5 Matsubara-Cho, Minami-Ku
Hiroshima 732-0822
Phone: 011-81-82-262-1111
Fax: 011-81-82-262-4050
www.hgh.co.jp

Connected to JR Hiroshima Station, the Hotel Granvia Hiroshima offers direct access to several of Hiroshima’s most popular sites, including Peace Memorial Park and Miyajima Island. Hotel amenities include five restaurants, bar, and lounge; laundry and dry cleaning services; hair salon; gift shop; and safe deposit boxes. Air-conditioned guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, complimentary internet access; mini-bar, TV, and phone.