

# JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF JAPAN & KYUSHU

## 18 DAY - LAND TOUR



This in-depth 18-day tour from the My Cruises Touring Collection, takes you to some of Japan's most famous locations as well as hidden gems that should not be missed. From the stunning natural landscapes of Kyushu to the unspoiled villages of Gifu and the old samurai towns of Kanazawa and Matsumoto. From the spectacular Japanese Alps to the vibrant bustling cities of Osaka and Tokyo, these are the sides of Japan you will remember. This tour offers several once-in-a-lifetime experiences, including an overnight stay in an onsen resort, a trip on the bullet train, hands-on craft workshops, up-close experiences with snow monkeys, and delicious local cuisine along the way.

<p><b>Day 1</b></p> <p>Arrive Fukuoka, Kyushu, Japan</p> <p><a href="#">*See Yanagawa Boat Cruise Tour Option (Notes)</a></p>	<p>Konnichiwa! Get ready to dive into the cultural wonders of <b>Fukuoka</b>, the lively gateway to this fascinating country! Make your own way to your hotel to begin the adventure of a lifetime.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel Nikko Fukuoka</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Hotel Nikko Fukuoka:</a></p> 

<p><b>Day 2</b></p> <p>Fukuoka</p>	<p>Today the tour starts with a captivating tour in <b>Fukuoka</b> exploring the rich history, vibrant culture, and breathtaking sights. The first stop is a visit to the revered <b>Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine</b>. While the main hall is currently undergoing renovations, the grounds are stunning and offer an inspiring start to the day.</p> <p>Spend free time wandering around <b>Monzen-machi</b>, the street that leads up to the shrine. Here you will find delicious Japanese snacks- both sweet and savoury to try and countless shops with unique Japanese souvenirs. Returning to Fukuoka city, delve into the <b>Hakata Folk Museum</b>, where the region's history and traditions come alive. Here you can participate in the traditional Japanese craft activity of <b>Hakata doll painting</b>.</p> <p>The evening is capped off with a delicious welcome dinner featuring the flavours of Fukuoka.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel Nikko Fukuoka</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Hakata Folk Museum</a></p>  <p>Incl: Breakfast &amp; Dinner</p>



<p><b>Day 3</b></p> <p>Fukuoka – Kagoshima - Kirishima</p> <p>(Approx. 323 Km)</p> <p><a href="#">Shinkansen:</a></p>  <p>*Please note: Due to luggage restrictions on the bullet train, you will need to pack a small overnight bag for tonight as your main luggage will be transferred separately to the accommodation of Day 4 in Miyazaki.</p>	<p>A trip to Japan wouldn't be complete without a ride on the iconic bullet train - <b>Shinkansen</b>. Reaching an average speed of 270 km, watch cities and countryside smoothly rush by as we head down the west coast of Kyushu to <b>Kagoshima</b>.</p> <p>In Kagoshima the tour will take you to <b>Shiroyama Observatory</b>, where panoramic views of Kagoshima City and its majestic surroundings unfold before your eyes. From the silhouette of <b>Sakurajima</b>, an active volcano across the bay, captivates with its raw beauty. Next, immerse yourself in the tranquillity of <b>Senganen Garden</b>, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where traditional Japanese landscaping and historical charm converge harmoniously.</p> <p>In the afternoon we head to <b>Kirishima</b> to experience authentic Japanese hospitality in at a <b>Japanese onsen (hot spring) resort</b>. Nestled amidst the lush landscapes, the resort offers a serene retreat, complete with soothing hot springs, and a <b>kaiseki (traditional course) dinner</b> featuring regional delicacies.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Iwozan Onsen Kirishima Hotel</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Shiroyama Observatory:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Senganen Garden:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Iwozan Onsen Kirishima Hotel:</a></p>  <p>Incl: Breakfast &amp; Dinner</p>
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<p><b>Day 4</b></p> <p>Kirishima – Miyazaki (Approx. 148 Km)</p>	<p>Today we head east to <b>Miyazaki Prefecture</b>-famous for its lush green landscapes, scenic coastlines and place in Japan’s ancient mythology. Discover <b>Obi Castle Town</b>, a well-preserved samurai treasure trove which is sometimes referred to as Kyushu’s own ‘little Kyoto’. Take your time exploring the town and keep an eye out for little moats with carp swimming in them.</p> <p>Next, we head to <b>Udo Shrine</b>, a truly unique and mythical cliffside shrine perched atop a steep cliff face overlooking the beautiful blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. In the afternoon we visit <b>Aoshima Island</b>, a tiny but spiritual island with a beach and shrine set back in the tropical jungle that is said to bring luck to married couples. Surrounding the island is a natural rock formation known as ‘devil’s washboard’.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel JAL City, Miyazaki</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Obi Castle Town:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Udo Shrine:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Hotel JAL City, Miyazaki:</a></p>  <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>



## Day 5

Miyazaki - Takachiho Gorge  
- Aso, Kumamoto

(Approx. 188 Km)

[Takachiho Gorge:](#)



Today unfolds amidst the natural wonders of **Takachiho Gorge**, a breathtaking marvel shaped over 100,000 years ago by eruptions from the nearby **Mount Aso volcano**. Towering cliffs adorned with vibrant foliage contrast magnificently with the crystal-clear waters below. You can explore the gorge from two distinct perspectives: the first entails a serene row down the river aboard rental boats (available for an additional fee, with possible wait times), where the calm waters make for easy self-navigation.

The second perspective, from above, involves a leisurely stroll along the paved path tracing the gorge's edge, offering panoramic views and thrilling vantage points where one can gaze straight down to the river below.

After enjoying the picturesque sights of Takachiho the tour will cross into **Kumamoto Prefecture** where the evening is spent in the shadow of Mount Aso. Relax and indulge in a complimentary dinner at the hotel, capping off a day of picturesque exploration.

**O/Nite: Kamenoi Hotel Aso Park Resort**

Incl: Breakfast & Dinner

[Kumamoto:](#)



[Kamenoi Hotel Aso Park Resort:](#)



<p><b>Day 6</b></p> <p>Takachiho - Bungo - Ono - Beppu, Oita</p> <p>(Approx. 133 Km)</p>	<p>This morning the tour visits <b>Kusasenri</b>- a vast grassy plain in the caldera which offers great views of the surrounding volcanic peaks. We then continue on into <b>Oita Prefecture</b> with a stop in <b>Bungo Ono</b> at the <b>Harajiri Waterfalls</b>. The beautiful horseshoe-shaped waterfalls are 120m wide with a height of 20 . Because of this shape it received the nickname 'Niagara of the East'.</p> <p>Explore the area including the nearby wooden suspension bridge, and a michi-no-eki (a Japanese roadside station) where you can try delicious foods such as Bungo Beef, Japanese dumpling soup, Toriten (a style of fried chicken), and other local cuisine from Oita Prefecture.</p> <p>After lunch we will visit a local sake brewery - <b>Fujii Distillery</b> to learn about the traditional brewery process, and perhaps try some of the varieties. The day ends with arrival into Oita's famed hot spring town of <b>Beppu</b>.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Amanek Beppu Yula-re</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Harajiri Waterfalls:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Fujii Distillery:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Amanek Beppu Yula-re:</a></p> 
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<p><b>Day 7</b></p> <p>Beppu</p> <p><a href="#">Hells of Beppu:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Amanek Beppu Yula-re:</a></p> 	<p>With more hot springs (onsen) than anywhere else in Japan, <b>Beppu</b> takes the crown as the nation's top hot spring destination. The morning is spent exploring the geological wonders of Beppu including a tour of the <b>Hells of Beppu (Jigoku Meguri)</b>. These natural wonders, with names like Blood Pond Hell and Sea Hell, offer visitors a captivating and surreal experience of the Earth's geothermal activity. The tour also includes entrance to the <b>Beppu Onsen Museum</b> which delves into the science, history, and culture of the hot springs in Japan.</p> <p>We then head out to the picturesque town of <b>Yufuin</b>. Here you can stroll through quaint streets, treat yourself to lunch, pop into some boutique and handicraft stores, and admire the serene <b>Lake Kinrin</b>.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Amanek Beppu Yula-re</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Yufuin:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Lake Kinrin:</a></p> 



<p><b>Day 8</b></p> <p>Beppu - Osaka</p> <p><a href="#">Sunflower Ferry:</a></p>  <p>商船三井さんふらわあグループビジョン</p> <p>ひとりが安全への使命と責任に踏み、 変わらぬ時代の潮流を捉え、新機軸を追求し続ける。 商船三井さんふらわあグループは人や地域とのつながりを大切に、 持続可能な未来を創ります。</p> <p>すべての人の日常を照らす太陽 すべての人から愛されるさんふらわあブランドへ</p> <p>商船三井さんふらわあ</p>	<p>Beppu boasts a rich cultural heritage awaiting your discovery. Immerse yourself in the flavours of the region with delectable local cuisine, rejuvenate your senses with thermal sand baths, or peruse traditional bamboo handicrafts among other delights.</p> <p>Later in the afternoon get ready to board the <b>Sunflower Ferry</b> for an overnight voyage to Osaka. Settle into your private cabin and enjoy a complimentary dinner as we cruise through the breathtaking vistas of the <b>Seto Inland Sea</b>, a perfect opportunity to relax and unwind.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Sunflower Ferry</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast &amp; Dinner</p>	<p><a href="#">Beppu:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Osaka to Beppu by luxury ferry:</a></p> 



## Day 9

Osaka

[Hotel Monterey Le Frere  
Osaka:](#)



After an evening sailing through the Seto Inland Sea the ferry will arrive at Japan's main island, Honshu. After an early onboard breakfast, the tour will disembark around 6:30am and head to the bustling city of **Osaka**. First stop is the imposing **Namba Yasaka Shrine**. With a different look to most traditional shrines, this shrine is renowned for its towering lion-headed deity, symbolizing protection and prosperity, making it a popular destination for locals and tourists alike. We then head to **Osaka Castle**, one of the world's most visibly striking historical landmarks situated smack bang in the middle of the city.

Explore both the spectacular surrounding gardens and the inside of the castle where you can learn much about the cities feudal past as well as take in the wonderful views of the city.

We then head to the lively **Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi districts**. Enjoy free time to wander around the bustling shopping arcade of Shinsaibashi and end up at the riverside area of Dotonbori, with giant 3D signboards and open-air ramen stands that fill the air with an appetite-whetting aroma.

There will also be time to explore Osaka's **Kuromon Market** where the different street foods of Osaka can be found. We will check into the hotel around 3pm and the rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to explore Osaka.

**O/Nite: Hotel Monterey Le Frere Osaka**

Incl: Breakfast

[Seto Inland Sea:](#)



[Namba Yasaka Shrine:](#)



[Osaka Castle:](#)



[Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi  
districts:](#)



<p><b>Day 10</b></p> <p>Osaka Free Day</p> 	<p><b>We booked a Get Your Guide Full Day Tour -</b></p> <p><b>Osaka: Kyoto &amp; Nara UNESCO Heritage Small Group Tour</b></p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel Monterey Le Frere Osaka</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.hotelmonterey.co.jp/en/lefrere_osa/ka/">https://www.hotelmonterey.co.jp/en/lefrere_osa/ka/</a></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Kyoto &amp; Nara Tour:</a></p>  <p>Book Things To Do, Attractions, and Tours Find, compare, and book sightseein... getyourguide.com</p>
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<p><b>Day 11</b></p> <p>Osaka – Gujo Hachiman – Takayama, Gifu</p> <p>(Approx. 313 Km)</p> <p><a href="#">Hotel Around Takayama:</a></p> 	<p>Today the tour takes us into <b>Gifu Prefecture</b> an area known for its grand outdoors, timeless traditions and living culture. We first head to <b>Gujo Hachiman</b> known for having the cleanest water in Japan. <b>Yanaka Komichi Lane</b> is a symbolic spot in Gujo Hachiman, where you can spend time wandering the cobblestone streets and admiring the crystal-clear waterways lined with willow trees.</p> <p>Uniquely, Gujo Hachiman is also the leading producer of Japan’s food replicas that you see decorating restaurant windows across the country. You’ll have time to take a <b>food replica workshop</b> to create your own quirky souvenir- this is an experience hard to find anywhere else.</p> <p>In the evening the tour will continue up to Gifu’s mountain region with the night in Takayama.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel Around Takayama</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Gujo Hachiman:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Gifu:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Food Sample Experience:</a></p> 
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## Day 12

Takayama – Hida -

Takayama

### [Suzuya Restaurant:](#)



Immerse yourself in a day of cultural exploration as you wander through the historic streets, visit iconic landmarks, and soak in the rich heritage of **Takayama**. Uncover the secrets of the Edo period as you explore the well-preserved **Takayama Jinya**, the historic government house.

For lunch Indulge in a culinary delight with our included lunch featuring the famed **Hida Beef**, celebrated for its melt-in-your-mouth tenderness and unparalleled taste (vegetarians will also have an option of delicious fresh local produce).

After lunch, spend free time exploring **Sanmachi Old Street**. With a traditional Japanese feel, browse charming shops, sake breweries, and traditional food vendors – the Mitarashi Dango are highly recommended here.

Next step into the open-air museum of **Hida Folk Village**, where traditional thatched-roof houses transport you to a bygone era. Admire the architectural marvels, each telling a story of rural life in the Hida region. Engage with interactive exhibits, participate in traditional crafts, and gain a deeper appreciation for the timeless customs that define this cultural gem.

**O/Nite: Hotel Around Takayama**

**Incl: Breakfast & Lunch**

### [Takayama Jinya:](#)



### [Hida Beef:](#)



### [Hida Folk Village:](#)



<p><b>Day 13</b></p> <p>Takayama – Gokayama – Kanazawa, Ishikawa (Approx. 128 Km)</p> <p><a href="#">Hotel Kanazawa:</a></p> 	<p>This morning, we depart from Takayama, making a delightful stop in <b>Gokayama</b>, a UNESCO World Heritage site celebrated for its picturesque traditional Gassho-zukuri farmhouses. These unique thatched-roof structures, resembling hands in prayer (Gassho), offer visitors an authentic and tranquil experience in the heart of rural Japan.</p> <p>Continuing our journey, we arrive in Kanazawa, a city nestled along Japan's western coast. <b>Kanazawa</b> is renowned for its captivating blend of traditional charm and contemporary allure.</p> <p>Our tour will include an entrance to the breathtaking <b>Kenrokuen Garden</b>, one of Japan's three most exquisite gardens, boasting meticulously landscaped grounds, traditional teahouses, and a variety of seasonal flora.</p> <p><b>O/Nite: Hotel Kanazawa</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Gokayama:</a></p>  <p><a href="#">Kenrokuen:</a></p> 
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<p><b>Day 14</b></p> <p>Kanazawa Free Day</p>	<p>Enjoy a day of exploration in <b>Kanazawa</b> at your own pace. Immerse yourself in the charm of traditional samurai districts, peruse contemporary art museums, stroll through bustling local produce markets, and admire the beauty of <b>Kanazawa Castle</b>. With an abundance of sights and activities, the city invites you to create your own memorable experiences.</p> <p>O/Nite: Hotel Kanazawa</p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Kanazawa:</a></p> 
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## Day 15

Kanazawa – Snow Monkey Park – Matsumoto, Nagano (Approx. 348 Km)

(N.B. the monkeys are wild. There are no barriers to keep them in the park, therefore, sightings cannot be guaranteed.)

### [Hotel Buena Vista:](#)



Our journey through the heart of Japan continues today into the **Japanese Alps of Nagano Prefecture**. Here we'll visit the Jigokudani Wild Monkey Park- the only place in the world where you can see wild monkeys soaking in hot spring baths. The **Japanese Macaques**, affectionately called **snow monkeys**, go about their daily routines - youngsters splash around the hot spring while mothers tend to their babies and the alpha male watches over the troupe. Their fascinating social structure can be observed up close, not from behind a fence but from right in their midst as they relax in the hot springs.

Visiting Jigokudani Monkey Park also provides a memorable opportunity walk amongst the towering forest and take in the beautiful peaceful setting of the alps.

After “monkeying around” the tour will head to **Matsumoto** for the evening. Feel free to wander the city at your leisure and maybe take in the stunning **Matsumoto Castle**, also known as ‘Crow Castle’, due to its dramatic black exterior. The castle is listed as a National Treasure of Japan and on a clear day, the backdrop of the Japanese Alps is the perfect touch on this majestic setting.

**O/Nite: Hotel Buena Vista, Matsumoto**

Incl: Breakfast

### [Jigokudani Wild Monkey Park:](#)



### [Japanese Macaque:](#)



### [Matsumoto Castle:](#)



## Day 16

Matsumoto - Tokyo

(Approx 230 Km)



[Shinjuku Washington Hotel:](#)



Today the tour will arrive to its final destination- **Tokyo!** Along the way, travellers can admire the changing scenery, from the rugged beauty of the Japanese Alps to the urban sprawl of Tokyo, with its iconic skyline looming in the distance. Keep your eyes peeled, as on a clear day you can get a glimpse of **Mount Fuji enroute.**

When we arrive in Tokyo your guide will give an orientation of this fabulous city starting with a stroll through the colourful streets of **Harajuku.** Head down bustling **Takeshita Street,** and marvel at the creativity and eccentricity that make this neighbourhood truly unique.

We then pay a visit to the beautiful **Meiji Shrine,** nestled in the lush greenery of **Yoyogi Park.** As you wander through the towering torii gates and peaceful forest, you'll feel immersed in the serenity of Shinto spirituality- you may even spot a Japanese wedding at the shrine.

Wrapping up the first afternoon in Tokyo is a final stop in **Shibuya** offering a mesmerizing spectacle of crowds scrambling across the iconic **Shibuya Crossing.**

**O/Nite: Shinjuku Washington Hotel**

Incl: Breakfast

[Takeshita Street, Harajuku:](#)



[Meiji Shrine:](#)



[Shibuya Crossing:](#)



<p>Day 17</p> <p>Tokyo Free Day</p> <p><a href="#">Tokyo:</a></p> 	<p><b>We booked a Get Your Guide Full Day Tour - Mt. Fuji Heritage Tour: Traditional Villages, Lakes &amp; Shrine</b></p>  <p><b>O/Nite: Shinjuku Washington Hotel</b></p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p>	<p><a href="#">Mt Fuji Tour:</a></p>  <p>Book Things To Do, Attractions, and Tours Find, compare, and book sightseein... getyourguide.com</p>
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<p>Day 18</p> <p>Depart or Stay in Tokyo</p>	<p>Sayonara! At the appropriate time make your own way to the airport, bidding farewell to Japan and taking home incredible memories.</p> <p>Incl: Breakfast</p> <p><b>We stayed on in Tokyo for a few extra days:</b></p> <p><b>O/Nite Shinjuku Prince Hotel, Shinjuku</b></p> <p><a href="#">Shinjuku Prince Hotel:</a></p> 	<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Yoyoi Kusama Museum Exhibition</li> <li>● Sumida Hokusai Museum</li> <li>● Gingko Avenue</li> <li>● Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden</li> <li>● Kitchen Town (Kappabashi Street)</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Gingko Avenue:</a></p> 
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## Thanks to '[My Cruises Touring Collection](#)' for a great trip

### Notes:

We travelled in **November** to see the **Autumn Colour (Koyo)**

**Islands Visited:** Kyushu & Honshu

**Tour Company:** My Cruises Touring Collection

**\*Day 1 - Yanagawa River Cruise:** Due to our early arrival into Fukuoka we decided to take advantage of our free day and booked a [KLOOK "Yanagawa River Cruising Experience"](#). It was approx. 1 hour by train from Hakata Station to Nishitetsu Yanagawa Station, and a short taxi ride to the meeting point for the cruise at Kamenoi Hotel Reception. This river cruise is an experience not to be missed. Be entertained by your singing boatman as he leaps over low bridges using a long bamboo pole while guiding you along Yanagawa's pretty waterways.

### Extend your stay:

We extended our stay in Tokyo after the tour concluded and moved into the buzzing Shinjuku district.

Highly recommend: [Shinjuku Prince Hotel](#) in the heart of the action

### More Tokyo Attractions:

- [Yoyoi Kusama Museum](#) - (book 2 months in advance for exhibitions)
- [The Sumida Hokusai Museum](#)
- [Gingko Avenue](#)
- [Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden](#)
- [Kitchen Town - Kappabashi Street](#)

### Get Your Guide Tours:

From Osaka - [Kyoto & Nara UNESCO Heritage Small Group Tour](#)

From Tokyo - [Mt. Fuji Heritage Tour: Traditional Villages, Lakes & Shrine](#)

### Getting to the Airport:

- Take the [Narita Express](#) from Shinjuku Station direct to Narita Airport for departing International flights