

The Nature of JAPAN

Art, History & Culture

TOUR DATES: 17 – 30 MAY, 2023



May is an ideal time to visit Japan. The transition between Spring and Summer offers a colourful and comfortable opportunity for us to explore the aesthetic relationship between Nature and Japanese Culture. The cherry blossoms will have given way to the wisteria, hydrangeas, irises and vivid-pink shiba flowers; and the crowds of Sakura-spring tourists will have dispersed.

Arriving in Tokyo, we are instantly immersed in the hectic, hyper-modern cosmos of 21st century Japan. In just a few hours, however, at the Meiji Shrine, we enter a 70-hectare evergreen forest, the spiritual heart of Tokyo and are reminded of the historic and ongoing connections between Nature and Japanese culture.

Our exploration of this fascinating relationship will take us from Tokyo to Kanazawa, from Kanazawa to Kyoto, and finally to Hiroshima. Along the way we visit art galleries and museums, both traditional and contemporary; gardens, large and small; wander streets, old and new, and sample some of the best Japanese food imaginable.

It is in Kyoto though, the once Shogunate capital of Japan, that we most clearly feel the strong multi-layered past permeating the present - Shinto Shrines and Buddhist Temples, immaculate Zen gardens and bamboo forests, streets lined with traditional wooden teahouses, apprentice geisha giggling behind windows in Gion and strains of Edith Piaf from a tiny teahouse along the Philosopher's Walk. Traditional, handcrafted ceramics, Samurai swords, hand-woven and embroidered kimonos, bullet trains, Dior, Gucci and Hello Kitty – this is the nature of Japan today.



INCLUSIONS & HIGHLIGHTS

- Return Economy Class flights from Sydney to Tokyo with Japan Airlines
- 12-nights upscale accommodation with traditional Japanese hospitality, daily breakfast and Wi-Fi
- 4nts Tokyo; 2nts Kanazawa; 4nts Kyoto; 2nts Hiroshima
- Ota Memorial Museum, Mori Art Museum in Roppongi Hills and Nezu Museum home to thousands of artworks including calligraphy, painting, sculpture, archaeological work and more
- Kanazawa with famous Kenrokuen Garden and Castle + geisha district + Samurai House + 21st Century Contemporary Art Museum
- Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum + Miyajima Shrine and Island
- Kyoto's Zen Temples and Gardens + Netsuke Museum
- Explore Japanese Buddhism
- Stunning Miho Museum, out of Kyoto
- Travel by high-speed Shinkansen (the bullet train)
- All sightseeing, cultural activities and private guiding, including entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- Private coach transfers where required
- Welcome Lunch and Farewell Dinner
- Plenty of shopping time
- Pre-departure art and cultural background information with your leader, Judith Salmon



About Judith Salmon

Judith Salmon has teaching experience in History and English Literature and an academic background in Fine Arts. Judith was formerly Director of 'Salmon Galleries' in McMahons Point, Sydney. She designs and leads art and cultural tours for people seeking authentic and stimulating travel experiences.



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Tokyo



Keio Plaza Hotel

Day 1 Wednesday 17 May

1st of 3 nights in Tokyo

Today we fly from Sydney at 08:15 (JL052), arriving into Tokyo Haneda Airport at 17:05.

Welcome to Japan!

We will be met by our local guide and transferred to our hotel by private coach. (Approx. 90 minutes)

Accommodation: Keio Plaza Hotel (Shinjuku) - 4.5-Star

Meals: None. Our hotel is surrounded by local eating places.



Meiji Shrine

Day 2 Thursday 18 May

2nd of 3 nights in Tokyo

This morning after breakfast, we meet our local guide in the hotel lobby and depart for the **Meiji Shrine** by private coach. This is the most visited sacred shrine in Japan and dedicated to the deified spirit of the Emperor Meiji, the first Emperor of Modern Japan. It is an oasis in the heart of frenetic Tokyo with 700,000 metres of forest, and a place we might like to revisit independently.

On leaving the Meiji Shrine, we will visit the **Ota Memorial Museum** which specialises in ukiyo-e woodblock prints. This is a Museum of very humane proportions with an excellent small shop and rest rooms.

After our outdoor exercise and first taste of Japanese spirituality and culture, we can return by coach to our Hotel, or stroll up Omotesando Avenue, enjoy the fascinating street fashion and explore some of the best of Japanese shopping. There is a sushi place close to the Ota Museum and the amazing Omotesando Hills Mall with restaurants and cafes a little further on. The Keio Plaza is not far away, we can taxi back to our hotel in Shinjuku.

Accommodation: Keio Plaza Hotel

Meals: Breakfast



Mori Art Museum

Day 3 Friday 19 May

3rd of 3 nights in Tokyo

Following breakfast, we meet our local guide in the hotel lobby and depart for the **Yayoi Kusama Museum**.

From the Museum we go by mini-bus to **Nihonbashi**, modern-day Tokyo's business and financial district. Here we will be guided through what was once the mercantile centre of Japan during the Edo period, and visit a replica of the **Kidai Shoran Scroll**.

We will make our own way back to our hotel in the afternoon.

Accommodation: Keio Plaza Hotel

Meals: Breakfast



Ginza


 Kanazawa Castle Park


Nomura Samurai House



Hotel Nikko Kanazawa



Kyoto



Nishiki Market

Day 4 Saturday 20 May

1st of 2 nights in Kanazawa

****Luggage will be transferred to the hotel in Kyoto separately****

Please prepare an overnight bag for 2 nights in Kanazawa

After breakfast and check-out, we will take our private coach to Tokyo station for connection with bullet train for **Kanazawa** (2.5 hours). We will walk to our hotel to store our small bags and return to Kanazawa station for a light, independent lunch, or lunch at our hotel. **If you are hungry on the train, lunch boxes and sandwiches can be purchased en-route.**

Mid-afternoon, we will depart by private coach for the **Nomura Samurai House** and **Nishi Chaya District**. We will spend around 2 hours exploring here and then return to our hotel.

Judith has suggestions for a local dinner place.

Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kanazawa – 4.0-Star

Meals: Breakfast

Day 5 Sunday 21 May

2nd of 2 nights in Kanazawa

After breakfast, we will meet our local guide in the hotel lobby and depart for **Higashi Chaya**, Kanazawa's most interesting and well-preserved Geisha district. Many of the buildings along the central street now house cafes and shops, including one still selling gold leaf products and another, a traditional Shima tea house.

Next, we will visit the **21st Century Art Museum**, designed by SANAA, also designers of Sydney Modern. Here we will have lunch and explore the amazing architecture and contemporary artworks.

From the Museum we will walk the short distance to the **Kenroku-en Garden**, classified one of Japan's three most beautiful gardens...a perfect garden.

Our coach will return us to our hotel mid-afternoon.

Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 6 Monday 22 May

1st of 4 nights in Kyoto

After breakfast and check-out, we walk to Kanazawa Station to board a bullet train for Kyoto. (2 hours).

Coach transfer to our hotel. Casual lunch at our hotel (prep time for our days in Kyoto).

Early evening we will make our way to a designated spot in **Gion** for a guided walk through the famous Geisha district. Afterwards we might go on to **Pontocho Alley**, another Geisha district, for dinner, in small groups.

Accommodation: Kyoto Tokyu Hotel - 4.5-Star

Meals: Breakfast

Higashiyama



Philosopher's Path



Fushimi Inari Shrine



Kyoto Tokyu Hotel



Kyoto National Museum

Day 7 Tuesday 23 May

2nd of 4 nights in Kyoto

After breakfast, meet with our guide in hotel lobby for a departure by private coach to visit **Ginkakuji (the Silver Pavilion)**, a Zen temple along Kyoto's eastern mountains (Higashiyama). In 1482, Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa built his retirement villa on the grounds of today's temple. The villa was converted into a Zen temple after Yoshimasa's death in 1490.

From the Silver Pavilion we will walk across to the **Philosopher's Path**, a pleasant stone path through the northern part of **Kyoto's Higashiyama district**. The path follows a canal which is lined by hundreds of cherry trees.

We won't walk the whole Path, but we will get a colourful impression of it; there is an interesting memorial and a couple of specialist shops to explore. Our coach will collect us from The Philosopher's Path and take us to Higashiyama, one of Kyoto's best-preserved historic districts, where we can see/buy souvenirs including Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, textiles, sweets and much more. Higashiyama is a great place to experience old Kyoto and there are many options for lunch as we explore the area. We return by coach to our hotel.

Accommodation: Kyoto Tokyu Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

Day 8 Wednesday 24 May

3rd of 4 nights in Kyoto

After breakfast, meet with our guide in the hotel lobby for our departure to **Miho Museum** by private coach. Miho is about a 1.25-hour interesting drive from Kyoto; it was designed by the renowned architect I.M. Pei, is an art and architectural marvel with an astounding collection of ancient European and Asian artefacts, located in an astonishing setting. The audio guide is superb. After a couple of hours at the Museum, our private coach will return us to our hotel.

FREE AFTERNOON - See suggestions for Saturday 27 May.

Accommodation: Kyoto Tokyu Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

Day 9 Thursday 25 May

4th of 4 nights in Kyoto

FREE DAY - Judith has some suggestions and recommendations:

- Early morning, pre-breakfast visit to **Arashiyama Bamboo Grove**.
- Visit **Kawai Kanjiro's House** – for the devotees of pottery and ceramic ware, its history and production.
- Visit **Daisen-In**, 24 sub-temples of the **Rinzai school of Zen** – highly recommend. These ones are small and unique and the whole place is profoundly serene.
- **Nomura Tailor Shop** – for fabric and all sewing paraphernalia.
- Visit **Gion Geisha District**.
- **Le Jazz Club** – live music from 7.30pm.

Accommodation: Kyoto Tokyu Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

Miyajima Island



Peace Memorial Park and Museum



Okonomiyaki



Sheraton Grande Hiroshima



Kiyomizu-yaki pottery

Day 10 Friday 26 May

1st of 2 nights in Hiroshima

****Luggage will be transferred to the hotel in Tokyo separately****

Please prepare an overnight bag for 2 nights in Hiroshima

This morning, after breakfast and check-out, we depart from Kyoto Station by bullet train to Hiroshima. (2 hours).

Upon arriving at Hiroshima Station, we will walk to our hotel. After check-in, those who wish, can accompany Judith to Orizuru Tower, Peace Memorial Park and Museum. We will take taxis there and back.

Accommodation: Sheraton Grande Hiroshima 4.5-Star

Meals: Breakfast

Day 11 Saturday 27 May

2nd of 2 nights in Hiroshima

After breakfast, we meet our guide in the hotel lobby to go to Miyajima Guchi Port by public transport: there, we board a ferry to **Miyajima Island**, a small sacred island located in the Inland Sea and a holy place of Shintoism.

After exploring Miyajima Island with our guide, we return to our hotel by public transport, or remain on Miyajima. For dinner, **Hiroshima Station** has a lot of restaurants, casual and otherwise, and the best Okonomiyaki (Japanese cabbage pancakes) you will ever eat!

Accommodation: Sheraton Grande Hiroshima

Meals: Breakfast

Day 12 Sunday 28 May

Overnight Tokyo

After breakfast and hotel check-out, we will walk to Hiroshima Station for the bullet train to Tokyo. (4 hours). Upon arriving at Tokyo Station, we will be met and transferred to the Keio Plaza Hotel.

Check-in after 14.00.

Our main luggage will be waiting for us.

FREE AFTERNOON – Judith will have suggestions.

Accommodation: Keio Plaza Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Farewell Dinner



Nakamise



Asakusa

Day 13 Monday 29 May

Half Day Tokyo; Afternoon Departure

FREE DAY

- After breakfast, Judith will accompany anyone interested to the **Mori Museum** in **Roppongi Hills**, Japan's premier contemporary art museum.
- Judith has suggestions for anyone interested in visiting special Japanese Gardens.

Check out by 15:00; depart for Airport by private coach.

Fly from Tokyo Haneda Airport at 19:20 (JL051).

Meals: Breakfast



Geisha

Day 14 Tuesday 30 May

Arrive Sydney at 06:25.



Sensoji Temple

