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SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS

Japan: A Cultural Journey

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DAYS CITIES GUESTS (MAX)

Eternally popular Japan is more in demand than ever right now. Why? No other place on Earth does the dance of old and new in quite the same way. Millennia of history are contained in its beautifully preserved temples and timeless arts and craft traditions passed down through generations. And yet Japan is also famous for embracing the future: skyscrapers, neon, high-speed bullet trains. But beyond the collision of the ancient and the ultramodern, there is the country's notorious pursuit of perfection (or perfect imperfection). This quality, which connects past and present, can be found in nearly every aspect of Japanese life, from the careful shaping of Bonsai trees to the micro-seasonality and fastidious presentation of the cuisine. You will experience both of these phenomena and many more examples of Japan's obsessive attention to detail on a journey that begins in high-energy Tokyo, wanders through under-the-radar Kanazawa and other coastal enclaves, and concludes on a serene note in traditional Kyoto.

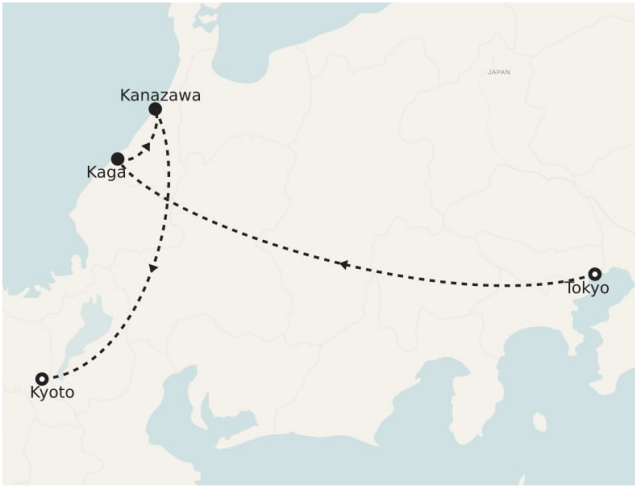
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| ✦ Learn how to make sushi from a master at Tokyo's legendary Tsukiji Fish Market | ✦ Unlock the essence of old Japan in Kyoto through temple tours and sake tastings |
| ✦ Delve into the daily life of Japan's legendary warrior class at the Nagamachi Samurai Residence in Kanazawa | ✦ Attend a private dinner accompanied by a live traditional Japanese musical performance |
| ✦ Take a pottery-painting workshop in the birthplace of Kutani ceramics | ✦ Go behind the scenes at a private view to meet local artists and gallerists at Tokyo's most exciting contemporary galleries |

If you are ready for a luxury experience,
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Christina Zeigler
YOUR PERSONAL TRAVEL ADVISOR

Japan: A Cultural Journey

9 DAYS | SEPTEMBER 24 - NOVEMBER 5
FROM \$16,995 | 16 GUESTS



Day 1 | Food, fun and fashion in Japan's neon capital


Nowhere can you find the intersection of timeless tradition and cutting-edge the way you can in Tokyo. Every neighborhood has its own identity and vibe: Harajuku offers avant garde street style, cat cafés, and world class vintage shopping; old-school Asakusa is the place of traditional shopping streets and izakaya pub food; and Kagurazaka provides a chance to get lost among charming cobblestone alleys and intimate sake bars. Stay at the Mandarin Oriental, centrally located near Tokyo Station and a quick walk from Mitsukoshi, one of Japan's grandest and oldest (it dates back to the 17th century) local department stores, which sells everything, including beautifully presented fresh fruit and bento boxes, at its excellent food hall.

 MANDARIN ORIENTAL, TOKYO

Day 2 | Learn the art of sushi-making and bonsai cultivation

Tokyo's cuisine is vibrant and varied, traditional but also wildly innovative. One of the best places to understand the city's culinary identity is at the famous Tsukiji Fish Market, once the largest in the world, a can't-miss stop for its epicurean treasure trove of dried foods and fresh seafood. Here, you can join a private, hands-on sushi-making class, where you'll learn about the ingredients and techniques involved as well as the cultural significance of the process. A master sushi chef guides you through each step, from the washing and preparation of the rice to the optimal method for rolling sushi. Afterward, visit the Shunkaen Bonsai Museum and its exquisite collection of painstakingly tended miniature trees. Set among serene koi ponds and Zen gardens, this stop is a balm after a busy morning at the market.


 MANDARIN ORIENTAL, TOKYO

 BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 3 | Serenity, culture, and performance art at a Shinto shrine

Start the day beneath the magnificent eaves of Hie Shrine, a 15th century Shinto site with statues of benevolent monkey gods and a tunnel of 90 bright red torii gates. You'll also get to see a performance of kagura, a sacred dance that wards off misfortune. Continue on to Tokyo's Nezu Museum, which houses a robust collection of pre-modern Japanese and East Asian art assembled by the philanthropist Nezu Kaichiro. The experience of wandering through the museum is like taking a masterclass in the Edo period; its halls hold everything from screen paintings and calligraphy to lacquerware and ornate armor. Afterward, you'll return emphatically to the present. Meet up with curators and local artists at two of Tokyo's most exciting art galleries in the Roppongi Hills neighborhood for a behind-the-scenes look at the city's contemporary art scene.

 MANDARIN ORIENTAL, TOKYO

 BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 4 | Artisan traditions and small country towns

There is no better or more exhilarating way to move through Japan than on the Shinkansen high-speed bullet train. The ride from Tokyo to the town of Kaga offers a peek into daily life outside the city, taking you through the countryside and past rural villages. During the prosperous Edo period (1603-1868), the Kaga area was a center for arts and culture through the patronage of the Maeda clan, a powerful and prominent samurai family. The Maeda’s legacy is still visible today in the city’s craft traditions and historical sites. After lunch, continue on to Yunokuni no Mori, a village dedicated to the handicrafts of the Hokuriku region. Makers’ workshops and craft studios are set within a cluster of traditional houses that are surrounded by forest. Join a class led by a master potter and learn to draw intricate Kutani designs on fine white pottery. Yamanaka Onsen, a 1,300-year-old spa village, is the next stop. Yuge Kaido Street (“yuge” means “steam” in Japanese) is lined with charming cafes, historic wooden houses, and artisanal shops selling local crafts such as Yamanaka lacquerware. Keep an eye out for Hasebe Shrine, a beautiful structure commemorating Nobutsura Hasebe, a 13th century military leader. Then it’s on to Kanazawa, where you will be staying at the stylish Hyatt Centric Kanazawa.

- 🏨 HYATT CENTRIC KANAZAWA
- 🍽️ BREAKFAST, LUNCH

Day 5 | A crash course in Japanese culture, from samurai history to modern art

The coastal city of Kanazawa is home to a historic samurai quarter, an authentic geisha district and meticulously manicured gardens. After a night at Hyatt Centric Kanazawa, start the day with a walk through Nagamachi, a fully restored former samurai district that flourished during the Edo period when the powerful Tokugawa shogunate dominated Japan. You can also visit a nearby silk-dyeing studio, where artists still practice centuries-old traditional methods. After lunch in Nagamachi, visit the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, a futuristic circular building with the finest collection of its kind in Japan. Then step back in time again at the Kenrokuen Garden, a 17th-century oasis sprawling across 25 acres planted with thousands of trees and 183 species of plants, landscapes with tranquil paths, graceful arched bridges, and quiet waterways. Hidden away in one corner is Seisonkaku Villa, a magnificent samurai home.

- 🏨 HYATT CENTRIC KANAZAWA
- 🍽️ BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 6 | Visit a city steeped in imperial heritage—and sake

Take the bullet train to Kyoto, once the capital of imperial Japan for more than a millennium, and today one of the country’s cultural capitals – a city of temples and tradition. Begin in the historic district of Fushimi, and visit Fushimi Inari, the most significant and striking of thousands of shrines dedicated to the Shinto god worshipped for bountiful harvests. Present a small offering to the resident deity, then make your way along the path which leads through hundreds of vermilion torii gates and up into the hills of Mount Inari. To understand Japan’s long history of sake brewing in the Fushimi district, and to taste some of the world’s finest sake in the place where it is made, head next to Gekkeikan Okura Sake Museum. Gekkeikan has been brewing sake for almost 400 years, and in its timber brewery you’ll learn all about the process while sampling a few varieties from a menu of 400 varieties. Afterward, check into the lovely Sowaka, a beautifully renovated sukiya-style ryokan with tokonoma alcoves, shoji screens, tatami mats, and intricate woodwork.

- 🏨 SOWAKA
- 🍽️ BREAKFAST, LUNCH

Day 7 | Slow down through meditation and appreciation

Chado (the way of tea) is one of Japan’s three great classical arts of appreciation, along with kodo (the art of incense) and kado (the art of flowers). Begin the day with a private tea ceremony at a Buddhist temple, led by a tea master who will explain the practice’s cultural significance, followed by a private meditation session led by a Zen master. Onward, to busy Nishiki Market, where since the early 17th century local producers have sold fish, vegetables, pickles, and all the ingredients required for Kyoryori, Kyoto’s traditional style of cuisine. The Nishijin District is beloved by fashion luminaries such as Givenchy creative director Sarah Burton and Comme des Garçons founder and designer Rei Kawakubo, and is the place to learn about ornate Nishijin-ori kimono textiles. Try making a tablecloth or silk scarf on a mini handloom, and visit the studio of master kimono designer Masataka Hosoo, whose clients include Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior. End the day at the Four Seasons Hotel Kyoto, an oasis of calm and elegance built around Shakusui-en, the hotel’s 800-year-old heritage pond garden.

- 🏨 FOUR SEASONS HOTEL KYOTO
- 🍽️ BREAKFAST, LUNCH

Day 8 | Natural beauty, traditional sweets, and a ceremonial meal

Begin at Kinkakuji, a Zen temple overlooking Kyokochi Pond. Built as a wealthy warlord’s retirement villa, it is commonly referred to as the Golden Pavilion thanks to the outrageous amount of gold leaf decorating its top tiers. In pastoral Arashiyama, a nationally designated Place of Scenic Beauty, wander the soaring bamboo forests before heading to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tenryuji, a 14th century Zen temple with a stunning garden. For a pick-me-up, take a private class in the art of making traditional wagashi sweets. Introduced from China in the 14th century and usually served with green tea, these little sweets are delicately flavored and intricately decorated. Finish with a Japanese-French fusion style dinner and meet a geiko (a geisha in Kyoto) and maiko (her apprentice), followed by a performance from a jikata, a geisha trained in traditional Japanese music.





- 🏨 FOUR SEASONS HOTEL KYOTO
- 🍽️ BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 9 | Bid farewell to Japan

Transfer by private vehicle to Osaka Kansai International Airport or Osaka Itami Airport for your connecting flight home.

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Christina Zeigler