

Day 1, Monday: Arrival in Tokyo Narita/Haneda airport. Airport Transfers

Welcome to Tokyo – capital of Japan and the heart of the most populated metropolis in the world. After clearing immigration and customs, we'll pay our respects to Japan's emperor Naruhito with a visit to the outer area of Japan's Imperial Palace. From there we'll continue to Meiji Shrine, a beautiful example of the simplicity of Shinto architecture. It is dedicated to the memory of Emperor Meiji, Japan's 122nd emperor, who ruled from 1867 to 1912 and was responsible for turning Japan from a backward wasteland into an industrial giant. On our final stop of this first day, at rush hour, we'll plunge headlong into Tokyo's busiest square as we hustle and bustle with Tokyo's citizens at Shibuya Crossing. Then it's time for dinner before heading to our hotel for check-in and a well-earned night's sleep.

Day 2, Tuesday: Modern Tokyo

After Shacharit and breakfast, we'll head out to explore further into this amazing megalopolis. We'll visit the outer market at Tsukiji – formerly Tokyo (and the world's) largest fish market. The fish market itself has moved to Toyosu, but the outer market remains, where wholesalers and retailers offer their wares in a wide range of foods and food-related items, some of which we may never have seen before. Then, it's on to the traditional neighborhood of Asakusa, Tokyo's former entertainment district. Here we'll visit the oldest and most important Buddhist temple in Tokyo – Senso-ji, as well as the colorful pilgrimage alley that leads to it.

After these two busy sites, it's time to take a break as we cruise along the Sumida river, Tokyo's primary waterway. Here we'll be able to enjoy our lunch as we sail past numerous office and hi-rise towers to Odaiba, an architecturally futuristic area and one of the best places to see some of the most beautiful urban views of the world. Odaiba is Tokyo's newest district. Built on a huge man-made island, it is home to TV studios, shopping malls, hotels and landmarks. Here, we'll become part of an immersive art installation called TeamLab Planets. Suffice it to say that "immersive" is the key word.

Our final stop of the day is Ginza. The word means Mint – not candy – but the place where coins are produced. This is the area where Japan's currency was first coined. Nowadays, Ginza can more correctly be called Tokyo's "Fifth Avenue." Here we'll find all the main, large Japanese Department Stores, as well as representatives of all the world's most famous fashion houses. Step into any one of the department stores and head down to the basements where the food floors can be found to admire the way food is presented and packaged. A sight to behold! And the prices too!

- Explore Tsukiji Outer Market
- Asakusa Kannon Temple & Nakamise Shopping Street
- Odaiba.
- Digital Art Museum: Epson Team Lab Planets,
- Ginza

Day 3, Wednesday: Hakone & Fuji

After Shacharit & breakfast, this morning we will leave Tokyo and head to the mountainous Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. The town of Hakone is best known for quality hot springs, beautiful views and art. We'll begin our visit at the Hakone Sekisho, a reconstructed border post that separated the capital Edo (before it became known as Tokyo) from the rest of the country (and we'll find out why this was needed). Then we'll enjoy a relaxing cruise on lake Ashi, one of the five lakes surrounding Mount Fuji, from where mount Fuji can be seen if the weather permits. Onwards and upwards for a cable car ride up the mountains to Owakudani Valley, an active volcanic area, where we'll get up close to this powerful natural phenomenon. Next is the Hakone Open Air Museum where hundreds of sculptures made by the greatest Japanese and world artists are displayed on a mountain slope, immersed into the nature and carefully designed botanical elements.

- Hakone Sekisho
- Lake Ashi cruise
- Owakudani Valley Volcanic area
- Visit Chokoku-no-mori, Hakone's open-air museum.

Day 4, Thursday: Tokyo – Kyoto – Kobe

After shacharit & breakfast we'll make a stop at the Harajuku neighborhood, the center of Japanese young culture and fashion. Here one can find all kinds of interesting fashion accessories and other creative equipment. Parallel is the Omotesando where great houses of fashion and style are located along the wide boulevard in architectonic jams. We'll then say farewell to Tokyo and head to Tokyo station where we'll board the Shinkansen, Japan's famous bullet train, and "fly" down the rails at 300kph to Kyoto, Japan's ancient 1,000-year capital. Often referred to as the "Jerusalem of Japan" Kyoto is famous for its 1600-plus temples and shrines. We'll visit the Arashiyama district with its bridges, temples, shrines and gardens, and learn which is which and what happens there. We'll also learn about the various types of Japanese gardens. We'll then stroll through the Bamboo Forest among the 60-foot high Bamboo spires. Afterwards, we'll drive to the port city of Kobe, home of "Ohel Shelomo", the oldest Jewish community in Japan, stretching back to the 1860s. Here we'll have dinner before checking in to our hotel

- Harajaku & Omototesando Street
- Shinkansen to Kyoto
- Arashiyama District
- Bamboo Forest
- Ohel Shelomo Synagogue, Kobe

Day 5, Friday: Kobe

After Shacharit & breakfast, we'll visit this interesting part of Japan. While not part of Japan's regular tourist route, Kobe offers numerous fascinating insights into Japanese culture. Our first stop will be the Nunobiki Botanical gardens. These are not traditional Japanese gardens, but are

quite spectacular as they are planted on a steep mountain slope overlooking the city. We'll take the cable car to the top and then walk down half-way as we admire the gardens. From there we'll continue to Kobe port to the memorial for the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake which claimed the lives of some 6,500 of Kobe's citizens.

Sake, rice wine, can probably be considered Japan's national drink. Made from three ingredients: rice, water and koji (and don't let anyone tell you different), it's quality depends on the location where the rice was harvested, how much the rice was polished, and the location of the spring from where the water comes. Unlike grape wine, sake is best when it's young, so aging is a relative term as far as sake is concerned. We'll visit the Hakutsuru sake museum and perhaps even enjoy some sake tasting.

Depending on time, we'll explore Kobe's Chinatown, the largest of its kind in Japan, before returning to the hotel to prepare for Shabbat. Candle lighting is at 6:34 p.m., so we'll meet in the lobby at 5:45 p.m. and walk to shul together. After shul we'll join the local community for a festive Friday Night dinner, along with *Divrei Torah*, *Zemiroth* and conversation.

- Nunobiki Botanical Gardens
- Kobe Port
- Memorial for the Great Hanshin Earthquake
- Hakutsuru Sake Museum

Day 6, Relaxing Shabbat at Ohel Shelomo: Kobe

Even though Ohel Shelomo is a Sefardi synagogue, the community has a Chabad rabbi and they daven at Chabad times. On the way to shul this morning we'll pass some of the old former Jewish homes in the Kitano neighborhood, whose former residents were part of Kobe's international and diplomatic community. We'll discover why Jews came to Japan in General and Kobe in particular, and why it became the haven to the Sugihara rescues during World War II. After shul, we'll enjoy Shabbat lunch with the community, followed by Mincha, and then we'll walk back to the hotel for a good Shabbat rest. After Shabbat, we'll have an opportunity to go out on the town independently to rub shoulders with the locals at their favorite nightspots.

- Kitano Walking tour
- Saturday night out on the town

Day 7, Sunday: Kyoto, part II

After Shacharit & breakfast we'll return to Kyoto to continue our exploration of the city. We'll begin at Nijo Castle, built by and for the Shogun Tokugawa Eiyasu in 1599. We'll visit the inside of the castle characterized with Japanese minimalist elegant grandeur as well as the elaborate gardens outside. From there we'll continue to Kiyomizu Dera, a complex of temples and shrines built on the mountainside to the west of the city. This is arguably one of the most beautiful complexes in all of Japan. Then we'll have some free time for shopping in the quaint side streets surrounding the complex. This is a place where we'll be able to find good quality items at reasonable prices. Our next stop will be Nishiki Market. Once a food market only, it has

over the years changed to become a more eclectic adventure. Afterwards, the highlight of the day: a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony with a Maiko (Geisha-in-training) who will introduce us to traditional Japanese dance, and also take a short question and answer session. We'll finish the day with a visit to the dramatic Golden Pavilion, one of Japan's iconic images, before dinner and then check-in at our hotel for overnight.

- Nijo Castle
- Kiyomizu Dera
- Ninneizaka and Sanneizaka
- Nishki Market
- Private Tea Ceremony with Geisha
- Golden Pavilion

Day 8, Monday: Kyoto – Nagoya – Takayama

After shacharit & breakfast we'll board the Shinkansen for the ride to Nagoya, the city that's best known as the home of Toyota. We'll visit the Toyota Museum where we'll be exposed to cars that are ancient, current and super-modern, include some of the concept models that are still only in planning. We'll continue through Gifu prefecture to the city of Takayama, gateway to the Japanese Alps. The place is known for generations for its quality wood products and wood artists. We will visit the local museum that shows the elaborately decorated festival floats, made hundreds of years ago by local artisans. The floats are in use twice a year, when the great Spring and Fall festivals are being held. We'll end the day with a stroll through Takayama's old town, with its quaint, traditional wooden buildings. Dinner and overnight in Takayama.

- Shinkansen
- Toyota Museum
- Yatai Kaikan Float Museum
- Takayama old-town walkabout

Day 9, Tuesday: Takayama – Matsumoto – Tokyo

This morning we'll bid farewell to Takayama after Shacharit & breakfast, and start our return to Tokyo. We'll make a stop at the Daio wasabi farm. One of Japan's largest wasabi farms, it has multiple large fields with a meticulously maintained network of small streams that constantly provides each wasabi plant with clear, flowing water from the Northern Alps. Only under such pristine conditions is wasabi cultivation possible. Tasting may be possible, but for the strong hearted only! Wasabi chocolate anyone? Onwards we go to Matsumoto, to visit Matsumoto's Black Raven Castle. Once the castle of the local lord, it had over time fallen into disrepair and was threatened with destruction by the local authorities. However a local school principal decided to undertake a crowdfunding campaign in order to restore and thus save the castle. We'll visit the castle and its collections. Afterwards we'll continue to Tokyo for dinner and overnight.

- Daio wasabi farm
- Matsumoto Castle

Day 10, Wednesday: Tokyo-Narita/Haneda Airport

Today we'll fly back home, waiting for the chance to visit Japan once again. Goodbye!
Sayonara! さようなら！