SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Japan Alps Winter Mini Tour

8 Days/7 Nights

Japan Alps Winter Mini Tour

Tour Overview

Outdoor hot spring onsens, warm sake, snow covered mountain peaks, and quaint mountain villages make the Japan Alps the place to be for a winter getaway. Add the unique outdoor activities only possible in the winter, and you have a travel experience that will create lifelong memories.

Destinations

Tokyo, Matsumoto, Hirayu/Okuhida, Takayama, Shirakawago, Kanazawa, Yudanaka/Shibu Onsens, Snow Monkey Park

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion
★★★★☆

Pace
★★★★☆

Physical Activity
★★★☆☆

Tour Details

The Japan Alps is a slow-paced region that has it all, without the crowds. Though readily accessible, the Japan Alps are still remote enough to have retained traditional lifestyles and architecture. When you add the unique opportunities that only Japan winters offer with the small crowds, the result is an unforgettable travel experience. The castle town of Matsumoto with its striking “Crow Castle” is sure to please with its numerous 17th-century warehouses. The quaint town of Takayama with its sake breweries invites exploration. The old farmhouses at Shirakawa-go will give you a glimpse of the way of life in 17th-century rural Japan. Visit the famous Japanese Snow Monkeys as they bathe in the outdoor baths, and enjoy some of the best outdoor baths in Japan while visiting Hirayu Onsen.

Tour Highlights	✔ Matsumoto Castle ✔ Hirayu Onsen ✔ Takayama ✔ Shirakawago - A UNESCO World Heritage Site ✔ Two Overnights at Japanese-style Onsens ✔ Three Kaiseki-style Dinners ✔ Jigoku-dani Snow Monkey Park
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Reserved Seat Train Tickets on Travel between cities ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
Tour Exclusions	✖ International airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map

Tour Destinations

Tokyo
Matsumoto
Hirayu Onsen
Takayama
Shirakawago
Kanazawa
Nagano
Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park

🚌Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Tokyo

You will travel on your own to Tokyo and check into the hotel in Tokyo. We will leave a message for you at the hotel informing you of the meeting time for the next day. No meals included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 2 Travel to Matsumoto; Matsumoto - Matsumoto Castle; Travel to Hirayu Onsen

Before leaving Tokyo you will need to prepare your luggage for transfer to Hirayu. We will be traveling to Hirayu with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After breakfast you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting before we will travel to Matsumoto. From the moment you step off the train and hear the announcement “Matsumotooooo” you will recognize that you are some place special. After lunch we will tour the famous Matsumoto Castle. This beautiful castle is also known as Crow Castle because of its stark black walls. The castle was first built in 1504 and remodeled into its current form at the turn of the 17th century. From the top of the main tower you will have a wonderful view of the city and the surrounding mountains. After touring Matsumoto Castle we will travel to the town of Hirayu in Okuhida. Okuhida is famous for its hot springs, and especially so for its rotemburo (outdoor baths) with views of the surrounding Northern Japan Alps. Hirayu is the oldest and largest of Okuhida’s onsen towns, and is said to have been discovered in the 1560s by the feudal lord Takeda Shingen. You will have the opportunity to enjoy the onsens after checking into the ryokan. Breakfast at the hotel, lunch at a local restaurant and dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 4 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 3 Free Day in Hirayu Onsen and Okuhida

Today is a free day to explore Hirayu and the Okuhida region. You can take this day to go skiing, take a snowshoe tour, or venture up the Shin-Hotaka Ropeway. The Shin-Hotaka Ropeway is one of Japan’s most unique ropeways with one of the largest elevation gains in the country (over 1,000 meters). It climbs up the side of the Hotaka Mountain Range, which includes Oku-Hotakedake, Japan’s third highest peak. The ropeway’s most distinguishing feature is its double decker gondola cars, the first of their kind in Japan, which offer excellent views of the Okuhida Region. You will retrieve your main luggage from the ryokan in the afternoon. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 4 Travel to Takayama; Takayama - Takayama Festival Yatai Kaikan

Before leaving, you will need to prepare your main luggage for transfer to Kanazawa. We will be traveling to Takayama and Kanazawa with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 3 days and 2 nights. After breakfast at the ryokan we will travel to the nearby town of Takayama. Takayama, in the middle of the Japan Alps, with its traditional inns, shops, and sake breweries, has managed to retain its traditional charm. After dropping off the overnight bags at the ryokan, we will enjoy a hot noodle lunch. After lunch, we will take a short bus ride to the Matsuri no Mori. This museum showcases the key aspects of the Takayama Festival, which takes place for two days each spring and autumn. The festival is known as one of Japan’s three most

beautiful festivals. Later in the afternoon, we will visit the Takayama Matsuri Yatai Kaikan. Here you will find 4 of the 11 actual floats used in the festival on display. The rest of the day is free. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 5 Takayama - Miyagawa Morning Market, Jinyamae Morning Market, Takayama Jinya, Sanmachisuji, Free afternoon

We will start the day in Takayama by strolling through the farmer's markets as we sample the numerous options from vegetable stands and stalls selling herbs, pickles, and souvenirs. Next, we will tour the Takayama-jinya which has been the governing office of Takayama and the surrounding area since the early 17th century. The guide will take you to the Sanmachi-suji district consisting of merchant homes dating back to the 16th century. From here the rest of the day is free to roam and explore Takayama. Visit the many temples, shrines and museums, rummage through antique shops, or relax at one of the sake breweries. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: TBD

Day 6 Travel to Shirakawago; Tour Shirakawago; Travel to Kanazawa

After breakfast we will take a public highway bus to the valley of Shirakawa-go. Shirakawa-go is the home of many Gassho-zukuri (Praying Hand) style homes which have been moved here from the surrounding area. These homes were first used as long ago as the 18th century and are still being used today. They are built to withstand the tremendous amounts of snow this area of Japan receives. We will stop for a short time to explore some of these traditional farmhouses. Following an enjoyable lunch and some free time to explore in the afternoon, we will catch another public bus to the city of Kanazawa. Kanazawa, located on the northern coast of Japan, was once controlled by one of the wealthiest families in Japan, the Maeda Clan. They were admirers and sponsors of many traditional arts, and these arts flourished under their sponsorship. Many of these arts are still being practiced today in Kanazawa. We will retrieve our main luggage after checking in at the hotel. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 7 Kanazawa - Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum, Nagamachi Samurai District, Nomura House; Travel to Yudanaka Onsen

Before leaving, you will need to prepare your main luggage for transfer to Tokyo. We will be traveling to Yudanaka Onsen/Shibu Onsen and Tokyo with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After breakfast we will tour the Kenrokuen Garden. This garden is considered to be one of the three best gardens in Japan, and was initially constructed in the 17th century. After enjoying the garden we will tour the Kanazawa Handicrafts Museum to learn how the local Kanazawa handicrafts are made. After lunch we will tour the Naga-machi Samurai District. This area of Kanazawa, located at the foot of Kanazawa Castle, was the residential district for the samurai serving the castle. The area preserves a historic atmosphere with its remaining samurai residences, earthen walls, private entrance gates, narrow lanes, and water canals. We will also visit the Nomura House where the Nomura family, a high-ranking retainer for the Maeda family, resided. After touring Kanazawa we will travel to Yudanaka Onsen/Shibu Onsen. Breakfast at the ryokan, lunch at a local restaurant and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 8 Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park; Travel to Tokyo

After breakfast, we will travel to the Snow Monkey Park. Here, at the Jigoku-dani (Hell Valley), we will delight in the world famous “snow monkeys” of Japan. The Red-Faced “snow monkeys” are only found in Japan, and enjoy using the thermally-heated mineral water baths all year long. After visiting the snow monkeys we will return to Tokyo by local train and Shinkansen. From here you will continue around Japan on your own. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Walking level descriptions:
Light – 0 to 2 miles on level ground
Medium – 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground
Heavy – 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground

Dates & Pricing

Dates	Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person)	Status
Jan 12, 2020 - Jan 19, 2020	¥442,777/ ¥64,545	Closed
Feb 2, 2020 - Feb 9, 2020	¥442,777/ ¥64,545	Closed
Jan 10, 2021 - Jan 17, 2021	¥475,049/ ¥64,545	Available
Jan 31, 2021 - Feb 7, 2021	¥475,049/ ¥64,545	Available

Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a $100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
    - Exact coverage dependent on state
        - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. CO, FL, IN, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
        - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
    - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
        - Up to 69 – $0
        - 70-74 – $100
        - 75-79 – $125
        - 80-84 – $200
        - 85+ – $300
    - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a $100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.

- All transportation from Tokyo to Tokyo as described in the itinerary

- Lodging for 7 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels

- Meals:
    - Breakfast every morning from Day 2 through Day 7 of the itinerary
    - Four Japanese-style lunches
    - Three Japanese-style dinners

- All transportation costs when traveling with the group (transportation costs during scheduled free times are the tour member's responsibility)

- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right (itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary

- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Hirayu
- Baggage transfer from Hirayu to Kanazawa
- Baggage transfer from Kanazawa to Tokyo

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do's-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions

- Airfare is NOT included.
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included
- Transportation to Tokyo at the beginning of the tour
- Transportation from Tokyo at the end of the tour

- A printed itinerary is not included

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