

# "Falling for the season"

## Shikoku & Kansai Foliage Tour

November 9-17, 2017

7nts/9days from \$2995 dbl/tpl \$3295 single

Reserve by May 1<sup>st</sup> - SAVE \$50 per person

In Japan's feudal past, the island of Shikoku was divided into four regions ó hence the name *shi* (four) and *oku* (region). The provinces of Awa, Tosa, Iyo and Sanuki became the modern-day prefectures of Tokushima-ken, K chi-ken, Ehime-ken and Kagawa-ken. The old names are still in common use in their prefectures.

Shikoku is the birthplace of the most revered figure in Japanese Buddhism, the monk and teacher Kobo-Daishi, who brought a populist form of Buddhism to Japan from China in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. For hundreds of years, a 750-mile pilgrimage route has circled this mountainous island, connecting 88 separate temples and shrines that claim connection to Daishi, also known as the Great Master.

Yet this is not merely a place for passive soul-searching. A rugged and ancient Pacific Ocean coastline, gorgeous free-flowing rivers and mountain ranges all beckon to be explored firsthand. If the inner demons are restless, there's also Takamatsu and K chi, attractive and youthful cities with excellent regional cuisine and all the trappings of 'mainland' modernity.

### Itinerary/Details

**Day 1 – November 9<sup>th</sup>, Thursday – Depart from Honolulu**

**Hawaiian Airlines #449 Departs Honolulu 1:45 pm – Arrive Kansai 6:50 pm +1**

International check in begins 3 hours prior to the departure time. Please meet your Panda Travel escort at the Hawaiian Airlines Terminal. After clearing security you will meet up once again at the gate area.

**Day 2 – November 10<sup>th</sup>, Friday – Kansai**

After clearing customs we will be met by our local guide and walk over to the hotel for the evening, Hotel Nikko Kansai Airport.

The hotel is ideally located on the airport grounds with a variety of restaurants as well as a 24 hour convenience store nearby. Rest up for tomorrow we are off to Hiroshima.

**Accommodations: Nikko Kansai Airport Hotel**



### Day 3 – November 11<sup>th</sup>, Saturday –Kansai- Hiroshima (B/L/D)

After breakfast, please meet up with your guide by 8:30 am. We are off to Hiroshima via train this morning. The luggage will be sent separately and meet up with us later at the hotel.

Our train departs at 9:46 am with an arrival at the Hiroshima Station at 12:26 pm. There will be one transfer on the way. The second portion is via bullet train and a box lunch will be provided.

Once in Hiroshima, we will take a short 10 minute ferry ride to Miyajima Island, one of the most scenic spots in Japan. It has long been regarded as an Island of Gods on the beautiful Seto Inland Sea. It is a romantic and historical island where Itsukushima Shrine, a World Heritage site, is located, along with the Virgin Forest of Mt. Misen, and numerous preserved shrines, temples and historical monuments.

Its star attraction is the oft-photographed vermilion torii (shrine gate) of Itsukushima-jinja, which seems to float on the waves at high tide ó a scene that has traditionally been ranked as one of the three best views in Japan.

From the ferry station we will walk along Omote-Sando, the main street from the port to Itsukushima Shrine. There are many souvenir shops on both sides of the street. You will have time to enjoy souvenir shopping for a Shamoji (a rice scoop) or the well-known Momiji manju, a bun with a bean-jam filling made from maple leaves as well and other crafts.

We will now visit the cultural heritage site, called the "Itsukushima Shinto Shrine" that is dedicated to the God protecting people from sea disasters and wars. It is said that this shrine was constructed around 593; however, after the warlord Taira no Kiyomori (1118-1181) rebuilt it in 1168, it became the magnificent vermilion-lacquered building it is today. The most interesting feature of this shrine is the Torii (a kind of gate symbolizing a shrine) and the Shaden (shrine pavilion) in the sea, which are both submerged at full tide, but at low tide the sea water recedes completely and it is possible to walk out to the gate

After some free shopping time, back by ferry to Hiroshima. With six beautiful rivers flowing through it, Hiroshima is called the City of Water. The origins of the city date back to 1589 when Mori Terumoto, a feudal lord, built Hiroshima Castle at the large delta of the Ota-gawa River. Because the delta resembled a large island, the area was called "Hiroshima", or 'wide island' in Japanese.

Although many only know it for the horrific split second on August 6, 1945, when it became the site of the world's first atomic bomb attack, it is now a modern, cosmopolitan city with excellent cuisine and a bustling nightlife.

Our first stop will be at the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park**, located in the center of Hiroshima City. It is difficult to imagine that this triangle shaped piece of land bordered by two rivers was once a busy commercial and residential downtown area. The atomic bomb eliminated everything in the town. After World War II, a group led by a Japanese architect Kenzo Tange designed the park to turn the land into the Peace Memorial Park. It was completed in 1954.

There are many buildings and monuments which commemorate people who lost their lives at that time and also represent the people's prayers for peace, such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the Memorial Cenotaph and the Statue of the A-Bomb Children, etc. By imagining the contrast between the misery of the atomic bomb attack and the beauty and tranquility in the park while visiting spots in the park, you will be moved to appreciate how precious peace is.

Our next stop is at the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum**, located in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. By standing on the Peace Boulevard side, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the Memorial Cenotaph, the Peace Flame and the A-Bomb Dome can be seen along a straight line. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which opened in 1955, gives people an opportunity to learn of the outcome of the bomb attack and consider what peace really means through many reference materials. The East Wing exhibits photographs, panels, videos and panorama models showing the actual history of Hiroshima before and after the bomb attack. The main building exhibits victims' belongings and references which show the misery of the bomb attack. You will see a burnt lunch box, a tricycle which a 3-year-old boy was riding, etc., which reflects the instantaneous destruction and strike right at the heart of visitors. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was designed by a group headed by Kenzo Tange, who also designed the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The strength of humanity rising up from the ruins is expressed in the piloti-style space under the main building.

The last stop today will be at **A-Bomb Dome**, a symbol of peace which most people have at least seen at one time in a picture. The building, which was designed by a Czech architect in 1915, had been used as the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall. Hiroshima citizens back then loved so much European modern-style buildings of the time. In 1912, the National Confectionery Exposition was held in this place. From that exposition, Baumkuchen, which represented German cake, was manufactured and sold in Japan for the first time. Since the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall was located only around 160 meters from the hypocenter, the building was blown up, and all those inside the building died. However, the building was not destroyed completely because the blast of the atomic bomb, which was vaporized in the air, prevented it from totally collapsing. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996 and has been representing people's prayers for a lasting peace.

Arrival at our hotel will be 5:30 pm.

Accommodations tonight are at The Hotel New Hiroden, just 5 minutes from Hiroshima Station. The remainder of the afternoon and evening are free. You will find many food and shopping options close by.

Please meet in the lobby by 6:30 pm as we are off to dinner at the Okonomiyaki Restaurant.

Okonomiyaki is a popular pan fried food that consists of batter and cabbage. Selected toppings and ingredients are added which can vary greatly (anything from meat and seafood to wasabi and cheese). This variability is reflected in the dish's name; "okonomi" literally means "to one's liking". The dish is available all over Japan, but is most popular in the west, particularly the cities of Hiroshima and Osaka.

Okonomiyaki is sometimes translated into English as "As-you-like-it Pancake". However, this may be misleading. Though it does consist of batter cooked on a griddle, okonomiyaki has nothing of the sweetness or fluffiness of pancakes, not to mention that it is usually filled with octopus, shrimp, pork, yam or kimchi. A more accurate comparison, which is also made, is between okonomiyaki and pizza.

After dinner we will walk back to our hotel, but if you are up for a walk, the romantic Hiroshima Castle is just 15 minutes away.

**Accommodations: Hotel New Hiroden** 

## Day 4 – November 12<sup>th</sup>, Sunday – Hiroshima-Imabari-Dogo (B/L/D)

After breakfast please meet your guide by 8:30am as we make our way to Matsuyama, the largest city in Shikoku, with the oldest hot spring, a beautiful castle, and literary tradition. The city's Dogo-onsen Hot Spring with 3,000 year history draws many tourists and residents.

The day begins with a drive to Imabari City via Onomichi, a quaint town that extends from the mainland across some of the neighboring islands. The islands are connected by the bridges of the Shimanami Kaido. Small ferries operate between the downtown area and the nearby islands, adding to Onomichi's nostalgic port town atmosphere.

Sit back; relax as we cross the bridges of the Seto Inland Sea by bus, beautifully dotted with over 600 islands. This body of water lies between the islands of Honshu and Shikoku.

The Shimanami Kaido, nickname for the Nishiseto Expressway is a series of seven bridges linking each of the six small islands. This route was opened in 1999 and has a total road length of 40 miles. The islands of the Shimanami Kaido are part of the Seto Inland Sea National Park, which celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2014, making it one of Japan's three oldest national parks.

Each of the bridges along the route, unique and magnificent structures, rises out of the placid waters to tower above the somnolent scenery. One of them, Tatara, was the longest cable-stayed bridge in the world when it was built (now it's the fifth longest). Its elegant 220-meter-high steel towers represent the folded wings of a crane. Further along the route is the 4,015-meter-long Kurushima-Kaikyo Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the world.

On arrival on Omishima Island we will be visiting the Minakami Suigun Museum, an institution dedicated to the Japanese navy forces of which actually were privateers rather than soldiers of active around the Inland Sea of Japan, from the period of the northern and southern dynasties (1336-1392) to the Sengoku period (1467-1590). These privateers, or pirates, did take the role of naval commanders in Japan during that time.

The Murakami naval forces were made up by three big clans: the Noshima Murakami clan, the Kurushima Murakami clan, as well as the Innoshima Murakami clan of they were extremely close-knit and regarded themselves as one huge family.

At the museum, the exhibition showcases documents of the Noshima Murakami clan. The second floor of the museum offers the "Exciting Adventure Room" where visitors can try on armor and traditional quilted silk garments of the Sengoku period of don't be shy, feel like a real feudal pirate! Outside the museum, a real ship of the Murakami Suigun is exhibited: the Kohayafune has once fought real battles on the Inner Sea.

From here we are off to lunch at a local restaurant followed by a visit to the Imabari Towel Museum.

The museum sits mountainside outside the city. This imposing building is in an architectural style that is best described as a "modern Japanese chateau". Once inside, you quickly realize that the familiar words "towel" and "museum" have been interpreted very broadly.

There are three floors of shops selling various textile items, local produced goods and a French tea shop. If you're looking for something to take home, you'll find plenty of options.

The museum part offers an exhibit showing the towel-making process from start to finish, from raw cotton, through spinning, and weaving on an automatic loom. Another room features a wall of 1,800 large spools of thread, and various artworks made of towels, or woven in toweling.

From here we are off to Dogo onsen, Japan's oldest hot spring with a 3,000 year history. It is located in the city of Matsuyama, the capital of Ehime.

The legend is that it healed a deity's illness in ancient time. The main building (Honkan), the symbol of Dogo spa resort, is a communal bathhouse erected in 1894. The magnificent three story castle-like wooden structure is the first public bathhouse designated as an important cultural asset in its 100 years anniversary. It is also known as a model of the bathhouse of gods in Hayao Miyazaki's animated film "Spirited Away". It has a watchtower with red glass windows on the roof, where they beat a time-telling drum three times a day.

The neighborhood offers quite a bit to do. Enjoy some time to stroll along the Dogo Shopping Arcade where you will find a variety of shops, cafes and restaurants. The retro-flavored Dogo-onsen Station stands on the other entrance of the arcade, where you may enjoy a restored locomotive "Botchan Train" beeping or the puppet clock tower acting with its music. Consider taking a rickshaw as an easy tour of the area.

Now it's off to our ryokan, Dogo Onsen Chaharu, conveniently located in the center of the Matsuyama onsen district, featuring newly renovated accommodations. Arrival will be by approximately 3:00pm.

After time to freshen up, please meet up in the lobby for a Japanese style dinner. After dinner do make a point to enjoy an onsen on their 10<sup>th</sup> floor, offering a great view of the area. Another rooftop bath is on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor.



### **Accommodations: Dogo Onsen Chaharu**

### **Day 5 – November 13<sup>th</sup>, Monday – Dogo-Kochi (B)**

Please meet your guide by 8:00am for a full day of touring and make our way to Kochi, a small and friendly city. Enjoy the casual atmosphere and a dose of southern flair.

The drive time is approximately 3 hours and we will make several stops along the way at Michi-no-Eki, popular roadside stations along the route. They are also fun stops to pick up a snack or quick shopping.

On arrival in Kochi our first stop will be at Kochi's Sunday Market, one of the oldest street markets in Japan.

Every Sunday morning since 1690, Outesuji, one of the main roads in downtown Kochi, begins its transformation into an open air market. It is known as Nichiyouchi, or simply, Sunday Market.

As you head down the market, have your camera and an adventurous spirit ready. Because the majority of the market is fresh vegetables, fruit, and other food stuffs, the main reason for going is to discover new sights, tastes, and smells – you'll feel like a kid again. Most of the vendors are happy to let you sample.

Among the local specialties you should try include miso paste, yuzu (a small, tart citrus about the size of a lemon), buntan (pamelo), kinkan (kumquats), biwa (loquat – similar to an apricot), otsukemono (various pickled vegetables), nukazuke (vegetables pickled in rice bran), and katsuo bushi (dried bonito tuna shavings). That's just the beginning.

At the western end of the market, just before Kochi Castle, you can find hand crafted items, antique shops, specialty fishing knives made locally, and other interesting items that make nice souvenirs. A favorite item are the little clay frogs that you put in your wallet, turning it into a money magnet.

Next we are off to Hirome Ichiba, the best of Kochi food under one roof. Opened in 1998, this very unique market is a way to spread the knowledge of Kochi's food, friendliness and artistic culture. You will have time to enjoy lunch here on your own. There are some 60 different shops to choose from.

After lunch we are off to visit Kochi Castle, one of just twelve Japanese castles to have survived the fires, wars and other catastrophes of the post feudal age. It was first constructed between 1601 and 1611, but most of its main buildings date from 1748 when they were reconstructed after a fire.

A unique feature of Kochi's castle is that its main tower (donjon) was not only used for military purposes, but also as a residence. In most other castles, the lords usually resided in separate palace buildings rather than in the castle keep. The castle's wooden interior maintains the appearance of its Edo Period origins, and the lookout point from the castle tower's top floor offers nice view of downtown.

Arrival at our hotel will be approximately 5:30pm. The Crown Palace New Hankyu, city center and close by to Kochi Castle offers variety of shops and dining options.

The remainder of the evening is free, enjoy Kochi!

**Accommodations: The Crown Palace New Hankyu**



(Wired Internet connection)

### **Day 6 – November 14<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday – Kochi-Takamatsu (B)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 9:30am as we are off for a full day of touring as we make our way to Takamatsu later this afternoon.

We begin the morning with a visit to the Yosakoi Dancing Museum. At this inter-active museum enjoy displays highlighting this yearly festival. You will have the opportunity to try on costumes and the staff will join with you in traditional dance steps. It's a lot of fun and great picture taking opportunity.

Summer is prime time for big festivals in Japan, and Kochi City is no exception. The highlight of the local year is the three-day dance/parade extravaganza in August, called "Yosakoi". What the word means exactly is open to interpretation, but the general sense is "let the good times roll". Over 10,000 dancers in many dozens of teams throng the main streets and thoroughfares, beating time with small wooden clappers called naruko. The costumes are colorful and fantastic.

Right outside the entrance to the museum is the local shopping arcade and we know there is no better way to wind down an afternoon than time to walk around and shop a bit. We will remain here for approximately 45 minutes. This is a good spot to have lunch on your own.

At noon we will say our good-byes to Kochi and journey on to Takamatsu, the capital of Kagawa, Japan's smallest prefecture. This port city was the main entry point to Shikoku Island until the opening of the Seto Ohashi Bridge in 1988. The drive time will be approximately 2 hours.

Once in Takamatsu we will be visiting Ritsurin Park, awarded three stars in the Michelin Green Guide Japan!

Formerly the retreat of the feudal lord, Matsudaira, the park has all the elements of Japanese beauty and tradition. There is a tea house where tea ceremonies were hosted in ancient time, ponds where the feudal lord and his guests floated boats and appreciated the moon. Walk along the many paths and admire the scenery. There are ample spots to sit and enjoy a soft-serve ice cream or feed the carps.

The paths are lined with breathtaking Bonsai-like pine trees and open fields that were used for gatherings. Enjoy experiencing the feeling of being totally away from the modern world - no high-rise buildings in sight. This will be a perfect **fall foliage viewing** site.

From here we are off to our hotel from the evening, JR Hotel Clement Takamatsu. The hotel offers a commanding view of the islands of the Seto Inland Sea and surrounding nature around the ruins of Takamatsu Castle.

Located in the recently developed shopping district around JR Takamatsu Station, the location is perfect for a free afternoon. If local arcade shopping is more to your liking, we will guide you there. The walk is just 10 to 15 minutes away.

Takamatsu's covered shopping arcade claims to be the longest in Japan. Enjoy an afternoon and evening free to stroll around the area, dine and shop.

**Accommodations: JR Hotel Clement Takamatsu**



### **Day 7 – November 15<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday – Takamatsu-Osaka (B/L)**

Please meet your guide by 8:30am as we are off to a full day of tour, ending the day in one of more favorite cities, Osaka!

We begin the day with a visit to Kompirasan, formally known as Kotohiragu, dedicated to sailors and seafaring. Located on the wooded slope of Mount Zozu, the approach to Kompirasan is a steep series of 1,368 stone steps.

Despite being one of the most difficult shrine approaches in Japan, Kompirasan is a highly popular site visited by pilgrims from across the country. The approach begins among shopping arcade filled with souvenir shops and udon restaurants.

No worries, no need to climb to the top to enjoy the atmosphere here. It is here that we will also enjoy the experience of udon making and afterwards lunch! This is truly a fun experience, guaranteed!

Next we are off to Naruto to experience the famous Naruto whirlpool cruise. Naruto whirlpools occur along the Shikoku coast of the Naruto Strait. They are created by large volumes of water moving between the Seto Inland Sea and the Pacific Ocean between high and low tide, combined with the unique underwater geography of the narrow strait.

According to the change of tides, the whirlpools occur roughly every six hours and can typically be seen once in the morning and once in the afternoon for an hour or two. The whirlpools vary in size, depending on the intensity of the tides.

The whirlpools are not dangerous to boats and are best viewed from sightseeing cruises which get right up next to and among the whirlpools. If you are not up for the cruise, no worries as the cruise departure point offers a waiting area with food and shopping.

Next we are off to Awaji Island, a connecting point as we make our way to Osaka. Here we will shop for takosen bei no sato, basically a takoyaki ball between two shrimp crackers. It's REALLY good.

From here we are off to Osaka, the working heart of Kansai. Famous for its down-to-earth citizens and the colorful *Kansai-ben* (Kansai dialect) they speak. First and foremost, Osaka is famous for good eating: the phrase

*kuidaore* (eat 'til you drop) was coined to describe Osakans' love for good food. Osaka is also a good place to experience a modern Japanese city. It's only surpassed by Tokyo as a showcase of the Japanese urban phenomenon

Accommodations for the next two nights in Osaka are at The Cross Hotel. The hotel is in a great location, five minutes away from the rail station and within walking distance to Dotonbori, Shinsaibashi, Den Den town and Namba Parks.

Namba is a very special place in Osaka. Small streets are packed with restaurants, shops (including two big shopping malls at Namba station), pubs (izakaya), karaoke and other kinds of Japanese entertainment. The area is full of people at night, making it colorful and vibrant.

We will arrive at the hotel at approximately 5:00pm and the remainder of the evening is free.

**Accommodations: Cross Hotel Osaka**



### **Day 8 – November 16<sup>th</sup>, Thursday – Osaka (B/L)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 9:30am as we are off for a walking tour of the Dotonbori area, steps from our hotel.

After a walk around we are off to enjoy hands on takoyaki making experience with lunch included right after.

The remainder of the afternoon and evening are free for you to enjoy this area. Be it shopping, strolling, eating or something as simple as people watching, you are in the best spot!

**Accommodations: Cross Hotel Osaka**



### **Day 9 – November 17<sup>th</sup>, Friday – Osaka-Kansai (B)**

It's our last day in Japan and no better way to make the best of it than to have free time for last minute shopping or get in a little sightseeing.

Please meet your guide in the hotel lobby no later than 2:15pm. We will be departing promptly at 2:30pm, making our way to the Kansai airport, but not without a last minute shopping stop at the Aeon Shopping Mall.

The super market offers a wide variety of omiyage items to bring back and as well there is a large Daiso 100 yen shop. We suggest that you might even like to pick up a bento here to enjoy before the flight.

Our luggage will be sent ahead and meet up with us at curb side on arrival at the airport.

**Hawaiian Airlines #450 Departs Kansai 8:50 pm – Arrive Honolulu 9:30 am**