



## **Hokuriku Autumn Tour 2018**

### **September 29- October 08, 2018**

**8nts/10 days from: \$3395 triple \$3494double \$4195 single**

*Tokyo and Kyoto—the modern and imperial capitals of Japan—represent the perfect merger of the ancient and the contemporary. On this trip, explore both as well the Hokuriku region. Bordered by the Sea of Japan and the Japan Alps, Hokuriku features a beautiful landscape dotted with historic temples and shrines, picturesque villages, hot springs, and rich natural surroundings. Hokuriku is also renowned for its traditional craftsmanship, with techniques passed down by generations of artisans creating everything from lacquerware and handmade Washi paper to forged steel swords.*

*Most travelers never leave Japan without seeing the skyscrapers of Tokyo and the temples of Kyoto, but miss experiencing one of the unspoiled gems that encompasses all that is traditionally Japanese, the Hokuriku region.*

*Join us on this unique 10-day Small Group Tour and experience it all! Maximum 25 tour members.*

#### **Itinerary/Details**

**Day 1 – September 29<sup>th</sup>, Saturday – Depart from Honolulu**

**Hawaiian Airlines #823 Departs Honolulu 4:05 pm – Arrive Narita 7:30pm +1**

Check in for international flights begin 3 hours prior to departure. Please check in with your Panda Travel representative and proceed to the departure gate area.

**Day 2 – September 30<sup>th</sup>, Sunday – Narita-Tokyo**

After clearing customs, our local English speaking guide will be waiting and join us for the drive to the Sunshine City Prince Hotel, ideally situated in the Ikebukuro section of Tokyo. The hotel is less than a 10-minute walk from the Ikebukuro JR Station.

The lobby of the hotel connects to a huge shopping and entertainment mecca with four towers, including a 240-meter-high skyscraper with an observation deck on the top. Sunshine City is typically open from 10:00am to 8:30 pm seven days a week.

A 24-hour Family Mart located right off the lobby in case you would like beverages, some hot and cold food items, or a snack.

The remainder of the evening is free.



**Newly remodeled Sunshine City Prince Hotel & lobby**



**Family Mart in hotel lobby**

**Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel**  **free**

### **Day 3 – October 1<sup>st</sup>, Monday – Tokyo (B/L)**

After breakfast at our hotel we will head out for a full day of touring. Please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am.

If you've ever dreamed about melt-in-your-mouth, out-of-this-world sushi, then you might have heard of Tsukiji, the largest fish market in the world. Most of Tokyo, and even high-end sushi restaurants in Hong Kong and San Francisco, gets their fish from this cultural landmark near the center of Japan's capital city.

Tsukiji sits on some of the most valuable real estate in Tokyo. At some point in the future, the inner market will be moving to reclaimed land on Tokyo Bay. The 2020 Olympics are coming, and the city is preparing.

Opened in 1935, Tsukiji sprang to life after the Great Kanto Earthquake destroyed most of Tokyo in 1923. It has since become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the city. Every morning sightseers start lining up at 3 a.m. to watch the frozen tuna auction. The more expensive fresh tuna auctions – where a single Bluefin once sold for nearly \$1.8 million- are privately conducted.

It is our first stop on tour and we will be here for 1.5 hours so that you have ample time to walk around and enjoy the outer market, visit knife-making artisan shops, tasting candies, nuts, and spices, and learning more about seasonal produce

If you're a foodie, love markets, enjoy photography – or simply like visiting unique places – then you'll probably love Tsukiji.

After a good stroll around the market, there's nothing like a sushi breakfast to complete the experience. There are plenty of sushi shops – make sure to choose one where you see locals dining. If you don't feel like sushi, there are other options including ramen, *donburi* and more.

If you finish early we encourage you to visit Tsukiji Hongan-ji Temple, less than one block away. With an Indian-style exterior, was built in 1617 near Asakusa, but was burnt down in a huge fire that swept through Edo (Tokyo) in 1657. The Temple was then rebuilt on the present site, but destroyed again by the Great Tokyo Earthquake of 1923. The current main building was built in 1934. The main building possesses a distinctive ambience not found in other Japanese temples, due to its variety of architectural styles.



### Tsukiji Fish Market

From here we are off to Ameyoko Shopping Street, famous throughout Japan for its wide variety of products.

The name "Ameyoko" is a short form for "Ameya Yokocho" (candy store alley), as candies were traditionally sold there. Alternatively, "Ame" also stands for "America", because a lot of American products used to be available there when the street was the site of a black market in the years following WWII.

You can get just about EVERYTHING here, clothes, bags, cosmetics, fresh fish, dried squid and spices are sold along Ameyoko. It is quite the scene to just walk around through the very crowded and narrow streets. An awesome place to sightsee, shop and eat! We will remain here for 1.5 hr., so you can shop at leisure.



### Ameyoko- best spot to find omiyage items

Its noontime and time for lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch we are off to Asakusa, the traditional, low-rise, down, and dirty Tokyo of yesteryear. Although on the surface it's ye olde Japan, this was the first part of the capital to have significant western influence. It was even the site of Japan's first cinema.

Attractions in the area include one of Tokyo's most historic temples – Sensoji, and the impressive Kaminarimon Gate that marks the entranceway to the temple. Also, you can't miss Phillip Stark's 'Golden Poo' on the roof of the nearby Asahi Breweries headquarters.

Sensoji Temple dates to 645, but with the original destroyed in the air raids of 1945, today's building is a 1958 reconstruction. At the top of the steps, as a mark of respect, clap twice and bow your head. It's also customary to make a small offering by tossing coins into the wooden rack.

The Five Storied Pagoda was built in 1973 and amongst others; it stands in honor of comedians! Standing 54 meters high, reinforced with concrete and steel, and like all pagodas, running down the center is a giant pillar of Japanese Cypress tree wood.

Once through the gate you'll be in **Nakamise Shopping Arcade**. The street is lined with colorful, lively stalls selling traditional knick-knacks, festival foods and rice crackers. There are over 50 shops along this shopping street. No worry, we will have time to shop and taste some of the food treats along the way.



### Asakusa and Nakamise Shopping Arcade

From here we make our way back to our hotel, arrival by 4:30pm. Once back, the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



**Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel** FREE WI-FI **free**

### Day 4 – October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tuesday – Tokyo- Mt. Fuji-Yamanashi (B/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 8:30am as we are off again on a full day of touring. Our destination today will be in the Shimobe Hot Springs area.

The day begins with a drive to Mt. Fuji and a visit to the 5<sup>th</sup> Station, a great spot for sightseeing. There are also many souvenir shops and restaurants.

From here we are off to Iyashino Sato Nenba for lunch on your own and free time to explore the village.

In the Nenba area, standing on the shores of Lake Sai with stunning Mt. Fuji as a backdrop was once a village of traditional thatch roofing classical farm houses. It was an actual productive farm village until 1966 when a big typhoon struck and destroyed the entire village. In 2006, with the aim of reviving that traditional Japanese scene of a thatched roof village, a new town, Fuji Kawaguchiko-cho was created.

Also, known as “Healing Village,” the community is comprised of 22 traditional thatched roof houses that depict old-time scenery of the Showa Period (1926-1989). Each house highlights traditional Japanese culture through hands-on experiences such as crafts, sampling of local produce, and an opportunity to dress up in armor or kimono. In winter, snowfall transforms the village into a magical, fairytale-like landscape that commands a magnificent view of Mt. Fuji like no other! We may just be in luck to capture this moment!

The village features not only beautiful scenery but also a variety of hands-on-activities, including Japanese paper making, hanging hina doll making. After lunch, enjoy time here and try your hand at one or more of the traditional craft making activities.

Below is list of what each house features.

1. **Wazanya Saiun.** A local Japanese restaurant that specializes in seasonal local cuisine and homemade sweets, with a spectacular view of Mt. Fuji.
2. **Water Mill.** Rarely seen these days, buckwheat, wheat, or rice is grounded here.
3. **General Information Desk.** Tourist information and various bookings are available here.
4. **Local Produce Processing and Marketing Center.** Local specialties, pickles, miso (bean paste), rice cakes, etc. are sold here. Enjoy a complimentary cup of tea!

5. **Kutsurogi-ya** (*House of Relaxation*). Matrons from the local community cordially welcome guests. Sometimes used for special events.
6. **Seseragi-ya** (*House of Babbling Brook*). Rustic crafts indispensable for rural life are produced here. On Sundays of March to November, visitors can learn how to make a letter picture.
7. **Erosion and Sediment Control Museum**. An exhibit of anti-erosion works, documents, visual data, and dioramas related to the 1966 typhoon that devastated Nenba.
8. **Charcoal Kiln**: A reproduction to educate visitors on charcoal making. Charcoal was once the main industry of Nenba area.
9. **Gorone-kan** (*House to lay down and doze off*). A house comprised of a recreation room for small concerts and four inviting, cozy rooms.
10. **Takumiya** (*House of Meisters*). This house holds short-term exhibitions of remarkable industrial artists in Yamanashi Prefecture.
11. **Miharashi-ya** (*House with a view*). Distinctive or prize-winning craftworks from the town and the prefecture are on exhibition here with a splendid view of Mt. Fuji.
12. **Hinomi-ya** (Fire-watch house). The ground floor holds a special collection of armor and kimono called, "Armors and the Periods." The second floor houses the armor of Civil War Period Commander, Takeda. For 500yen, try on kimono or samurai armor and take your own photos with Mt. Fuji as your backdrop. Arrive early to avoid the long lines.
13. **Kayanuma House of Pottery and Incense**. Hands on experience of pottery and incense making from fragrant pieces of wood.
14. **Kami-ya Sakate Sanbo** (Japanese paper workshop).
15. **Rest station**
16. **House of Oishi-tsumugi & Fabrics**. Hand-weaving of Yamanashi's traditional craftwork, Oishi-tsumugi, and making of trinkets using cocoons.
17. **Pottery Workshop Fuji Roman-gama**. Make an owl figure and paint on fired biscuits before it is glazed. Fun for all children.
18. **Crepe-cloth Works & Hanging Decorations**. Mobile ornaments are displayed here and visitors can try making fancy goods in Japanese cloths.
19. **Omoide-ya** (*House of memories*). Local specialties and handmade crafts are introduced and sold here.
20. **Shokujidokoro Satoyama** (*Regional restaurant*). Bright, flavorful, seasonal food with a hometown taste, made from local ingredients. Try Houtou, hand rolled Udon.
21. **Stone-ground Soba Noodles – Shosen**. This shop's handmade noodles are highly ranked at a nationwide soba popularity poll. Reservations for groups of up to 60 persons are available.
22. **Old House of the Watanabes**. A private folk dwelling was renovated to re-create the time when the silk cultivation was thriving.

From here we make our way to our hotel for the evening, Shimobe Hotel, located along the Fuji River which flows on the western side of Mt. Fuji. Surrounded by a Japanese Red Pine forest and clear stream, the hotel features twelve baths drawn from two springs.

This Japanese inn possesses a rich history with various natural hot spring baths that date back 2000 years. According to legend, Shimobe Hot Spring offered relief to Shingen, a pre-eminent daimyō in feudal Japan after his shoulder was injured in battle. The lukewarm water of this hot spring has a healing effect on fractures and bruises, and many people visit to recuperate from their ills.

Our arrival will be by 4:00pm. After free time to freshen up or enjoy the onsen, please meet in the lobby for our Japanese dinner at 6:00pm.



**Accommodations: Shimobe Hotel**  **free in public areas- Japanese style rooms**

## Day 5 – October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Wednesday – Yamanashi-Matsumoto-Takayama (B/L/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am as we are off on another full day of touring.

The day begins with a drive to Matsumoto, embraced by seven great peaks to the west and three smaller sentinels to the east. Matsumoto occupies a protected position in a fertile valley no more than 20km across at its widest. Views of the regal Alps are never far away, and sunsets are breathtaking.

In the 14th and 15th centuries it was the castle town of the Ogasawara clan and continued to prosper through the Edo period to the present. Today, Matsumoto is one of Japan's finest cities – an attractive, cosmopolitan place loved by its residents. Admirers from around the world come to enjoy its superb castle, pretty streets, galleries, cafes, and endearing vistas.

Later this afternoon we will visit Matsumoto Castle, but first a stop at a fruit farm for fruit picking and eating experience.

Next, a visit to the Ishii Miso Factory for lunch. Founded in 1868, Ishii Miso makes miso the way they always have – aging it in cedar barrels for 3 years. They pride themselves in only using soybeans and rice grown in Japan as well as local spring water. At typical lunch here includes miso soup, salad with miso dressing, rice balls, and even ice cream made using miso.

Now, we are off to visit Matsumotojo, one of Japan's most beautiful original castles and for which the city is famous for.

Matsumoto Castle is one of the most complete and beautiful among Japan's original castles. It is a "hirajiro" - a castle built on plains rather than on a hill or mountain. Matsumoto Castle is unique for having both a secondary donjon and a turret adjoined to its main keep. The castle structures, in combination with their characteristic black wainscoting, give off an air of grandeur and poise.

Matsumotojo's main castle keep and its smaller, second donjon were built from 1592 to 1614. Both these structures were well-fortified as peace was not yet fully achieved at the time. In 1635, when military threats had ceased, a third, barely defended turret and another for moon viewing were added to the castle.

The wooden interior of Matsumoto Castle provides an authentic experience unlike that felt at many other castles rebuilt of ferro-concrete. Interesting features of the castle include steep wooden stairs, openings to drop stones onto invaders, openings for archers, as well as an observation deck at the top, sixth floor of the main keep with nice views over the surrounding city.

In spring, Matsumoto Castle is a popular cherry blossom spot. Many visit to stroll around the spacious castle grounds and park. Along the outer castle moat are hundreds of cherry trees that provide lovely views when they are in full bloom.

From here we are off to Takayama and the drive will be approximately three hours. We will be making a rest stop along the way.

Takayama boasts one of Japan's most atmospheric townscapes and best-loved festivals. A visit here should be considered a high priority for anyone travelling in Central Honshū.

Its present layout dates from the late 17th century and incorporates a wealth of museums, galleries, and temples for a city of its compact size. Meiji-era inns, hillside shrines and temples, and a pretty riverside setting beckon you.

Once here we will check into our hotel, Hida Hotel Plaza followed by dinner shortly after.

Our hotel is ideally situated in the center of Takayama. Most tourist attractions, such as the old streets of Takayama, the Higashiyama Walking Course, the morning market along the Miya-gawa River, the Hida Kokubunji Temple, and the Takayama Jinya (a historical government house), are within a 15-minute walk from the hotel.

After dinner the remainder of the evening is free.

**Accommodations: Hida Hotel Plaza**  **free**

### **Day 6 – October 4<sup>th</sup>, Thursday – Takayama-Shirakawago-Kanazawa (B)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 8:30am as we are off again on a full day of touring.

The morning begins with a visit to Takayama Jina, one of two morning market here.

With an array of products that shifts with the seasons, you will find only the freshest fruits, vegetables, flowers among other items at the stalls along the market.

Unlike regular souvenir stores, shops at the morning market exclusively stock products that were conceived and grown by the people running them. The locals who run these shops are friendly as can be, and are always looking to engage customers in conversation.

From here a visit to Takayama Matsuri Yatai Kaikan where four of the autumn festival's eleven floats (yatai) are exhibited. The elaborately decorated floats are several hundred years' old and beautiful examples of Takayama's legendary craftsmanship.

They shine and catch the eye with their garish red, excessive gold and majestic black. The floats installed here wait while being admired, they are changed three times a year to show visitors the entire collection. Some dating back to the seventeenth century, their sculptures and lacquered panels require special care, which also explains the rotation of these pieces of art that are truly put to the test when they set forth, slowly but surely, in the streets of the city.

Next, we will visit Takayama's old town, beautifully preserved with many buildings and whole streets of houses dating from the Edo Period, when the city thrived as a wealthy town of merchants.

The southern half of the old town, especially the Sannomachi Street, survives in a particularly pretty state with many old homes, shops, coffee houses and sake breweries, some of which have been in business for centuries.

Several homes in the old town open their doors to the public. They provide a glimpse behind the facade into the former living quarters of the local merchants and exhibit traditional household goods and local arts and crafts.

Enjoy free time for lunch on your own among the wonderful collection of shops and cafés. It's beautiful small streets and canals shops are filled with many crafts and souvenirs to see, touch, taste, and smell creating a very unique experience.

This afternoon we are off to Shirakawago Village, a World Heritage site famous for its thatched roof houses. In the winter months, the Shirakawa-go area is known for its heavy snow accumulation. The kayabuki yane roofs have been steeply pitched on purpose, to help snow slide off the tops of the houses more easily. The roofs in Shirakawa-go are referred to as gassho-style, because their shape resembles a pair of hands pressed together in prayer (gassho).

Once here we will be visiting Wada House, constructed around the 1800's. It is the largest gassho style house in Shirakawa-go. The garden, hedge, and surrounding fields and waterways are preserved in their traditional state and known for their dignified beauty. The main house, along with the storehouse and outhouse, are designated as important cultural assets. Currently, the second floor and part of the first floor are open to the public and a variety of artifacts and traditional everyday items used by successive generations of the Wada family are exhibited. Ancient documents have established that during the Edo Period members of the Wada family served as officials at the guardhouse and traded in explosives and raw silk.

From here we will be checking into our hotel for the evening, Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel, ideally situated, just a short walk from Kanazawa Castle and Nagamachi Samurai District.

Arrival will be at approximately 5:30pm and the remainder of the evening is free.

**Accommodations: Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel**  **free**

### **Day 7 – October 5<sup>th</sup> - Friday– Kanazawa-Wajima-Kanazawa (B/L)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 8:00am as we journey to the Noto Peninsula, a pleasant escape from Hokuriku's urban sprawl. The peninsula is known for its coastal scenery as well as for its rural atmosphere. The drive time is approximately 2 hours and we will stop along the way.

Today we will be visiting the lacquer-making town of Wajima, the hub of the rugged north, known as Oku-Noto. Famous products include Wajima-nuri lacquerware, Suzu-style pottery, locally harvested sea salt and iwanori seaweed.

Our first stop is at the Wajima Morning Market, the city's most famous attraction, believed to date back over a thousand years. Daily between 8:00 and 12:00, the pleasant pedestrian street in the city center is lined with vendors selling various goods, including fresh seafood and produce. Elderly women, who bring in their goods from local farms, contribute a lot to the market's character.

Also on sale at the morning market is lacquerware, the city's most well-known handicraft. Known as wajima nuri, the local lacquerware is distinguished for its durability, which is achieved from extra stages of coating. To create a single piece of Wajima lacquerware requires many specialized artisans and dozens of processes.

Next is a visit to Kiroiko Kaikan, a museum of the Kiriko Festival. The museum houses "kiriko lanterns", the huge paper lanterns used in summer festivals in different parts of Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa.

This museum was relocated to a new site closer to Wajima' morning market, and has a very different look from the previous. Do to the museum's new design, you are now able to see kiriko from two different levels and from different angles, making it easier to appreciate.

Each lantern has its own personality, with kanji calligraphy, lacquer coating and ornate decoration, so it's fun to discover these differences. There is also a small souvenir shop. Enjoy some free time here to explore.

Time now for lunch, Japanese lunch at a local restaurant.

Lastly, we will visit The Ishikawa Wajima Urushi Art Museum. On display there is a wide variety of lacquerware set in an atmosphere conducive to admiring the works. This is the only museum in Japan which specializes in Lacquer (Urushi) Art. Enjoy the displays of many lacquer art works by various artists belonging to different periods. The Museum has a collection of not only Wajima lacquer art but also lacquer work from different regions of Japan as well as from overseas.

Now we make our way back to Kanazawa, arrival by 5:30pm. Once back the remainder of the evening is free.

**Accommodations: Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel**  **free**

### **Day 8 – October 6<sup>th</sup> - Saturday– Kanazawa-Kyoto (B)**



After breakfast, please meet your guide by 9:30am as we journey off to Kyoto, old Japan, quiet temples, sublime gardens, and colorful shrines. We will arrive there later this afternoon by Express Train. Our luggage will be transferred by truck and meet up with us at the hotel.

The morning begins with a visit to Kenrokuen Garden, classified as one of Japan's "three most beautiful landscape gardens" alongside Mito's Kairakuen and Okayama's Korakuen. The spacious grounds used to be the outer garden of Kanazawa Castle and were constructed by the ruling Maeda family over a period of nearly two centuries. Opened to the public in 1871, Kenrokuen features a variety of flowering trees which provide the garden with a different look for each season.

The name Kenrokuen literally means "Garden of the Six Sublimities", referring to spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water, and broad views, which according to Chinese landscape theory are the six essential attributes that make up a perfect garden. Enjoy a stroll around Kenrokuen to understand this landscape theory as the grounds are teeming with water features, bridges, teahouses, trees, flowers, stones, viewpoints, and hidden nooks to discover.

From here, a visit to the Sakuda Gold and Silver Leaf Shop for a hands-on gold leaf pasting experience.

Gold leaf production in Kanazawa dates back 400 years and today is one of the city's many flourishing traditional crafts with gold leaf decorated goods featuring heavily in the city's souvenir stores. Gold Leaf Sakuda is one of the more popular specialty gold leaf stores.

The story of Kanazawa gold leaf began in 1583, an important point in the city's history. That was the year that Lord Toshiie Maeda, the first ruler of the local Kaga clan, rode into the city and established himself at Kanazawa Castle. That same year he ordered the first production of gold and silver leaf. This was part of a wider push by the Maeda family to encourage the development of arts and crafts in Kanazawa which resulted in the city becoming one of Japan's leading centers of culture. Traditional handicrafts still flourish today in Kanazawa and among them perhaps nothing better expresses the local pride in workmanship and artistry than the use of gold leaf. Gold leaf is used to decorate folding screens, lacquerware, ceramics, glassware, sculptures, calligraphy, and Noh drama costumes. It is also essential for decorating temples, shrines, and Buddhist altars.

Next, a visit to Kanazawa's Higashiyama Higashi District, a beautifully preserved traditional neighborhood. Kanazawa was one of the few major cities in Japan that was not bombed during World War Two, leaving its architectural heritage well preserved. Enjoy a sophisticated retreat from modern life.

During the Edo Period, it prospered as a district with many *chaya*, or teahouses, which offered exclusive entertainment by geisha. The tranquil ambience created by historical wooden buildings with latticework and traditional street lamps will take you back in time. You can still visit some of the teahouses where Japanese high-society was once entertained and indulge in reminiscence of the old days.

From here, visit to Omicho Ichiba, a lively covered food market which has been in operation since 1721. Nicknamed "Kanazawa's kitchen", here you will find 186 different stores, selling seafood, fresh fruit and vegetables, and confectionery. There are also several grocery stores, clothing stores, flower stalls, and restaurants. The market has a very cheerful atmosphere and is a great place to explore Kanazawa's food and drink culture. Enjoy free time to explore and have lunch on your own.

From here, off to the Kanazawa Station for our express train to Kyoto, Thunderbird 32, departing at 3:19 pm and arrives at the Kyoto JR Station at 5:39 pm. Our hotel, New Miyako Hotel is just across the street from the station and we will walk over.

After checking in the remainder of the evening is free. Speaking of location, there is so many options for dining and shopping all steps away. The AEON Mall is right around the corner and across the street is the Kyoto JR Station, so much available.

**Accommodations: New Miyako Hotel**  **free**

### **Day 9 – October 7<sup>th</sup> - Sunday– Kyoto (B)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby as we are off on a half-day tour here in Kyoto.

The morning begins with a visit to Kyoto's famed Golden Pavilion. Be it capped by snow in winter or set against a lush green background in summer, nothing is as symbolic of Kyoto as Kinkaku-ji's golden reflection shimmering across the rippled surface of the pond before it.

Kinkaku-ji is one of Japan's best-known sights. The original building was built in 1397 as a retirement villa for Shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. His son converted it into a temple.

In 1950, a young monk consummated his obsession with the temple by burning it to the ground. The monk's story was fictionalized in Mishima Yukio's *The Golden Pavilion*. In 1955, a full reconstruction was completed that exactly followed the original design, but the gold-foil covering was extended to the lower floors.

The temple is set in three stories. The 1st floor is Shinden-zukuri, the palace style. It is named Ho-sui-in. The 2nd floor is Buke-zukuri, the style of the samurai house and is called Cho-on-do. The 3rd floor is Karayo style or Zen temple style. It is called Kukkyo-cho.

Both the 2nd and 3rd floors are covered with gold-leaf on Japanese lacquer. The roof, upon which the Chinese phoenix settles, is thatched with shingles.

The entire temple is surrounded by a beautiful garden with a pond in the front called the Mirror Pond. The stones in the pond give a representation of the Buddhist era.



### **Golden Temple & grounds**

From here we will be visiting Nijo Castle, built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo Period. His grandson completed the castle's palace buildings 23 years later and further expanded the castle by adding a five-story castle keep.

The wide moat, massive stone walls, and heavy yet elaborate gates are still impressive, and were the only fortifications the inhabitants felt necessary, so firm was their grip on power. The grounds are large and contain several lovely gardens as well as groves of plum and cherry trees. The palace building itself is imposing, yet upon closer examination, is rich in decorative detail.

Inside the palace are several masterpieces of Japanese art, most notably the painted screens of the main chamber. In this room, the shoguns met the daimyo (high-ranking warlord-administrators) who sought an audience. The screens were painted by artists of the Kano school and employ rich colors and large amounts of gilt to depict flowers, trees,

birds, and tigers. They were meant to impress. Also in the palace are the famous "nightingale floors," which were designed to squeak when stepped on and thus alert guards to any intruders.



### Nijo Castle

Now, back to our hotel, arrival by 12:30pm so that you can enjoy a full afternoon and evening of shopping!



**Accommodations: New Miyako Hotel**  **free**

### Day 10 – October 8<sup>th</sup> - Monday– Kyoto-Nara-Kansai (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:30am. It may be our last day on tour, but we still have much to see and do before our flight home later this evening.

The morning begins with a visit to Fushimi Inari Shrine, an important Shinto Shrine in Kyoto and famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates, which straddle a network of trails behind its main buildings. The trails lead into the wooded forest of the sacred Mount Inari, which stands at 233 meters and belongs to the shrine grounds.

The approach to the shrine is lined with many colorful shop and food stalls. Grab a snack as you walk along or maybe some omiyage to bring home.



### Fushimi Inari Shrine

From here, we make our way to Nara, drive time approximately one hour. Once there, a fare well Japanese lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, a visit to Nara Park and Todaiji Temple.

Nara, the ancient capital city in the Kansai region of Japan. Throughout 2010 the city celebrated its 1300th anniversary. Centuries before anyone had heard of Delhi or Shanghai or London or Paris—and long before anywhere called Kyoto (let alone Tokyo) existed—Nara was the first permanent capital of Japan, and the place where the country began to establish itself as a Buddhist kingdom.

If you think of Japan as a land of bullet trains and J-pop in Shinjuku storefronts, come to Nara—a city filled with rolling hills, ancient temples, and 1,200 entitled deer roaming its old streets.

Our first stop will be at the Nara Deer Park, home to hundreds of freely roaming deer. Considered in Shinto to be messengers of the gods, Nara's nearly 1200 deer have become a symbol of the city and have been designated a natural treasure. You can purchase deer biscuits to feed them. The deer bow immediately when they see you have food.

From here we are off to visit Nara's premier attraction, Todaiji Temple, and its Great Buddha (Daibutsu), Japan's largest bronze Buddha. When Emperor Shomu ordered construction of both the temple and Daibutsu in the mid-700s, he intended to make Todaiji the headquarters of all Buddhist temples in the land. As part of his plans for a Buddhist utopia, he commissioned work for this huge bronze statue of Buddha. It took eight castings to complete this remarkable work of art. At a height of more than 15m (50 ft.), the Daibutsu is made of 437 tons of bronze, 286 pounds of pure gold, 165 pounds of mercury, and 7 tons of vegetable wax. However, thanks to Japan's frequent natural calamities, the Buddha of today isn't quite what it used to be. In 855, in what must have been a whopper of an earthquake, the statue lost its head. It was repaired in 861, but alas, the huge wooden building housing the Buddha was burned twice during wars, melting the Buddha's head. The present head dates from 1692.

Be sure to walk in a circle around the Great Buddha to see it from all angles. Behind the statue is a model of how the Daibutsuden used to look, flanked by two massive pagodas. Behind the Great Buddha to the right is a huge wooden column with a small hole in it near the ground. According to popular belief, if you can manage to crawl through this opening, you'll be sure to reach enlightenment. You can also get your English-language fortune for ¥200 by shaking a bamboo canister until a wooden stick with a number comes out; the number corresponds to a piece of paper.

The wooden structure housing the Great Buddha, called Daibutsuden, was also destroyed several times through the centuries; the present structure dates from 1709. It is the largest wooden structure in the world, but only two-thirds its original size.



**Nara Deer Park**



**Todaiji Temple**



**The Great Buddha**

Our touring time is winding down as we journey off to the Kansai Airport, but before we do, one final last-minute shopping stop at the AEON Mall. The supermarket here is a wonderful spot to pick up a freshly made dinner bento to enjoy at the airport while waiting on our flight.

**Hawaiian Airlines #450 Departs Kansai 9:00 pm – Arrive Honolulu 9:55am**

