

Takayama Spring Festival & Cherry Blossoms

April 10TH – 19TH, 2020



8nts/10day fr: \$3895 triple \$3995 double \$4795 single

Reserve by October 1st - SAVE \$50 per person



Osaka



Cherry Blossoms



Asakusa

Gorgeous festival floats color the town, along with the blooming cherry blossoms, and "karakuri" marionettes put on a breathtaking performance! Come along and experience this very special 2020 Takayama Spring Festival Tour.

Thought to be around 400 years old, the Takayama Festival is counted as one of the three most beautiful festivals in Japan. It is held every spring and autumn, and it shows-off what is great about the Hida region. The focal point and must-see attraction of the festival are the beautiful festival floats, which are products of the fabulous artisanship of the Hida masters. With elaborate, artistic ornaments, masterfully designed marionettes exhibit incredibly dexterous movements, and clever contraptions for maneuvering them around town. The floats are really masterpieces in their own right! At nighttime, the floats are covered with lanterns, and the parade of these floats creates a beautiful fantasy world completely different from the daytime procession.

Yet, this is just the beginning as we have also included the very best of Osaka & Kyoto along with Shirakawago Village and Kanazawa. We end in Tokyo, Japan's capital for 3 days where we have included a complete free day for shopping or sightseeing on your own.

There're also three garden visits, two bullet train rides, a hands-on gold leaf pasting experience and TeamLab Borderless, a world of artworks without boundaries, a museum without a map.

Itinerary/Details

Day 1 – April 10th, 2020 Friday – Depart from Honolulu

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

Check in for international flights begin 3 hours prior. Please meet your Panda Travel representative at the Hawaiian Airlines international check-in counters, located in Terminal 2, Lobby 4.

Day 2 – April 11th, 2020 Saturday – Kansai-Osaka (D)

On arrival at the Kansai Airport, please make your way to the baggage claim area and then proceed to customs clearing. On exiting customs, our local guide will be there to meet us for the drive to the recently opened Karakusa Hotel Osaka Namba.

Talk about location, less than 2 blocks from the heart of Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi shopping streets. This spot is perfect to feel and see the real Osaka, with limitless dining and shopping opportunities. A dinner bento box will be provided so that you can enjoy along the ride.



Karakusa Hotel Osaka Namba

Welcome to Osaka, Japan's 3rd most populous city and the working heart of Kansai. Famous for its down-to-earth citizens and the colorful *Kansai-ben* (Kansai dialect) they speak, it's a good counterpart to the refined atmosphere of Kyoto. Primarily, 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: Karakusa Hotel Osaka Namba  **free**

Day 3 – April 12th, 2020 Sunday – Osaka-Kyoto (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am as we are off on a full day of touring. Our luggage will be sent along to Kyoto and meet up with us later this evening.

The morning begins with a visit to the Osaka Castle, one of Osaka's most popular landmark sights. This is also a popular cherry blossom viewing site. We will be early for peak viewing, but we just may get in a peek.

Travel back in time almost 400 years to feudal Japan on the chaos and violence of an epic conflict—the final one of the samurai era. In 1614 and 1615 hundreds of thousands of samurai—blasting guns, shooting arrows, and wielding swords—unleashed their force on the Osaka castle, inaugurating the downfall of the Toyotomi clan and sealing Tokugawa Ieyasu's position as Japan's undisputed master. Explore the fury of samurai warfare—from gory beheadings to fierce sword fights.

For days Ieyasu's forces barraged the castle's walls with fire from 300 cannon, causing fear and confusion. In January 1615 Hideyori finally signed a treaty, ending what became known as the Winter Siege, or *Fuyu no Jin*. But the truce fell apart, and the Summer Siege, or *Natsu no Jin*, began.

Magnificent Osaka Castle has been destroyed – and restored – several times, with its most extensive refurbishment completed in 1997. As you walk around you can still marvel at its massive stone walls, gold-leaf trim, copper roof, and panoramic views. There is also a fascinating on-site museum that chronicles its tumultuous history.



Osaka Castle



snacks & souvenirs



view from top of castle perch

From here we are to the Dotonbori, the city's most famous entertainment district offering endless dining and shopping. We will remain here in the area for two hours so that you can enjoy time to shop and have lunch on your own.



Dotonbori



Shinsaibashi Shopping Street & area around here



Now, off to Kyoto, a city of 1.5 million, beloved not for its go-all-night sleeplessness but its quiescence. In pockets of Kyoto, you can see Japan as it was centuries ago, as if modernity itself were a simple inconvenience, something to be adapted or ignored as chosen. This is, after all, where everything we think of as Japanese—its court culture, its art, its artisanry, and, oh yes, much of its spectacular cuisine—was born or perfected.

This afternoon's touring begins with a visit to Kiyomizu Temple, one of the signature World Heritage sites in Kyoto that dates back 1200 years.

Kiyomizu-dera Temple is perhaps the most popular of the temples in Kyoto and is a fixture in the minds of the Japanese people. The temple's veranda juts out of the side of a mountain supported by 13-meter-high wooden columns. The main hall with its distinctive hip-shaped roof of cypress bark rests to the rear of the veranda and houses within it a priceless statue of Kannon Bodhisattva, the goddess of mercy. From the veranda, one can appreciate fine views facing west over the city of Kyoto. This is an auspicious place to watch the sunset, which may also explain the romantic associations accorded to the temple.

Several other buildings designated as "national treasures" dot the grounds, as do waterfalls and landmarks which have entered popular lore. Thus, people come to the temple to drink water from the falls by collecting it in tin cups; the water is said to have therapeutic properties and drinking from the three different streams is said to confer health, longevity, and success in studies.

Also on the temple grounds is Jishu-jinja Shrine. It is said that praying here will help one succeed in finding love match. People desirous of a romantic partner can be seen walking between two prominent stones with their eyes closed. If one can make the journey alone, this is taken as a sign that you will find love. Those who need assistance in making the crossing will require an intermediary to help them find their mate.

Our visit here begins with a walk up Chawan-zaka or Kiyomizu-michi, the street leading to Kiyomizu Temple. This street is one of the most popular tourist spots in Kyoto. There are many gift shops, food stands, restaurants, and cafes on this street. The main feature of this street is Nama-Yatsunami. Nama-Yatsunami is the most popular Kyoto sweet.

Now, off to Ninenzaka and Sannenzaka preserved districts, two of Kyoto's most attractive streets, sloping lanes that lead down from Kiyomizu-dera Temple.

Lined with beautifully restored traditional shophouses, this pair of pedestrian-only lanes that make for some of the most atmospheric strolling in the whole city. In fact, it's here that you are most likely to be able to imagine what Kyoto looked like before modernity descended in full force. Enjoy free shopping time.

From here, off to our hotel, Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo, ideally located right across the street from the JR Kyoto Station and just around the corner from the AEON Mall. There are so many dining and shopping options to enjoy tonight. Our arrival will be by 5:30pm. After checking in, our guide will be available for a walking tour of the neighborhood.



Accommodations: Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo free

Day 4 – April 13th, 2020 Monday – Kyoto (B)

Please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am as we are off on a full day of touring.

Our morning begins with a visit to the 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 are off to 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.

Now, off to the Kyoto, Festival of the Ages Building Toni Toni, a cultural shopping area located in Kyoto's Okazaki district. Up-and-coming artists have put together a unique interior so that you can enjoy a simulation of Kyoto's famous Festival of Ages any time of the year.

Toni Toni boasts over 30 stores offering everything from foods to sweets and general merchandise. Enjoy free time here for shopping and lunch on your own.

Next is a visit to the dramatic and colorful Heianjingu Shrine. Admire this brightly colored shrine, with its vermilion pillars and green roof, and its enchanting inner gardens and ponds that reflects the elegance of life in the ancient Japanese court.

While most Shinto Shrines are known by the vermilion torii out front, here the torii is anything but ordinary. It is vast, standing almost 25 meters high and set so far away from the main compound of the shrine that many people assume it's completely unrelated.

Explore the vast gravel strewn open area in front of the main shrine, make wishes at the shrine, buy amulets and fortunes, and observe the Japanese as they go through their various religious rituals.

The inner garden surrounding it is divided into three parts, the East (Byakko), the Middle (Soryu), and the West (Seiho) gardens. The Taihei-kaku hashidono (covered bridge) was moved from the Kyoto Imperial Palace. It is an interesting structure, having a multi-layer structure at its mid-point. Enjoy time to walk around and explore.

Now, off to our hotel, arrival by 4:00pm. Once back, the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo  **free**

Day 5 – April 14th, 2020 Tuesday – Kyoto-Takayama & Takayama Spring Festival (B/L/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we journey off to Takayama to enjoy the Takayama Spring Festival. **Please prepare a small overnight bag as our luggage will be sent separately to Kanazawa.**

The morning begins with a bullet train ride, Nozomi 120 departing the Kyoto JR Station at 9:45am and arriving at the Nagoya Station at 10:20am. From here we will transfer to the Limited Express Train, Hida 7 to Takayama Station with an arrival at 1:10pm.

A bento box lunch will be available as our lunch to enjoy on the train ride.

Once in Takayama, our bus will take us to our hotel to drop off our belongings and then we are off to enjoy the afternoon festivities at the Takayama Spring Festival. Originated in the 15th century, this widely acclaimed festival is one of the as one of the most beautiful and colorful in Japan.

Once you arrive and begin to take part, an authentic feel and aura of an era gone by takes over and quickly you realize the significance of this event. Enjoy watching the various processions which consist of thousands of people. The festival features twelve tall antique floats that are not only renowned for their artisanship, but also officially designated as important cultural assets of Japan.

One of the most attractive parts of the festival is the costumes and musical performances that enchant its visitors. One other very notable aspect is the procession titled Tokeiraku parade where people wear hats adorned with bird feathers and sound bells and beat drums to the shishimai lion dance performed by dancers whose head gear is in the design of a lion's head.

Then comes the Yatai- they are some majestic floats that have all kinds of devices and appliances, such as marionettes which move so dexterously and skillfully that takes the spectators by surprise and awe. In the evening, these yatais are illuminated with over 100 paper lamps which gives it an unmatched look and feel.

If you are up for a hike, walk up the highlands a bit and enjoy the aerial view of the enlightened floats as they make their way through the streets of the town.

We will return to our hotel by 5:30pm to check-in and enjoy dinner. Accommodations for the evening are at Hoshokaku, an onsen resort and just a three-minute walk to the old town. From their open-air bath, enjoy a view of the townscape below.

“Upon entering the hotel, visitors’ eyes are drawn to the imposing ceiling beams and the tatami passageway leading off the hall. The Japanese-style rooms display the beauty and skill of Hida architecture and artisans, while the western and combined Japanese-western rooms offer luxurious comfort.”

After dinner, let's meet up and enjoy the Takayama Night Festival with Japanese lanterns illuminating the floats.



Accommodations: Hoshokaku  **free- Japanese style rooms**

Day 6 – April 15th, 2020 Wednesday– Takayama -Shirakawago-Kanazawa (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we make our way to Shirakawago and Kanazawa.

The morning begins with a drive to Shirakawago Village, a Japanese mountain settlement in what was once considered a wild and unexplored region. Because of the area's natural environment, with high mountains and heavy snowfall, interaction with neighboring regions was limited. However, this also created the conditions for the development of unique cultural practices and lifestyles.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995, it is famous for their traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old.

Gassho-zukuri means "constructed like hands in prayer", as the farmhouses' steep thatched roofs resemble the hands of Buddhist monks pressed together in prayer. The architectural style developed over many generations and is designed to withstand the large amounts of heavy snow that falls in the region during winter. The roofs, made without nails, provided a large attic space used for cultivating silkworms.

Walk along narrow roads, between beautiful colorful gardens and well-maintained houses, so far away from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo. Here you will feel relaxed and calm, walking among these old Japanese houses that have such a special place in Japanese culture and history. It is almost a bit Zen'ish.

While here we will be visiting the Kanda-ke house, a stately old-fashioned house with 160 years of history, once used in the sericulture and brewing industries. It is commonly said to be a late Edo period building that used traditional ridgepole designs from that time. The Gassho style roof is on the main part of the house. If the roof is shaken during a typhoon or strong wind, the shaking does not affect the house.

The first floor has a reception hall called "Oe" with a living room and a parlor, which had been used for agriculture. Here you will find a wall-mounted phone that the Kanda family used, as well as the bridal kimono of one of the fourth-generation Kanda brides, and many American goods such as an antique clock that was the first of its type in the Shirakawa Village. There is a hearth by which you can warm yourself even now. There is also homemade wild grass tea that is boiled on the hearth in an iron kettle.

On the second floor where unmarried men and employees slept, there is a small window called Himimado. As gassho-style houses were prone to fire, they were able to keep check on the hearth, located on the first floor from this window.

The 2nd-3rd floors are primarily sericulture workshops that are now set up as exhibition halls. There are various brewing tools from the time set up here. On the second floor there are also guides and information to show you the history of the house and the Kanda family.

On the fourth floor is a storeroom where you can gaze out over the village from a small window. The top floor is very small and can only hold about 3 people.

Now, lunch time, at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, we make our way to Kanazawa and once there a visit to Shiroyama Park, in downtown Kagoshima that extends over Mt. Shiroyama. With an elevation of 107 meters, the mountain formerly served as the site of a castle fortification, which led to its name. Shiroyama literally means "castle mountain" in Japanese.

The park is most famous for its Shiroyama Observatory with spectacular views over downtown Kagoshima, Kagoshima Bay and Sakurajima. The park will hold the interest of travelers interested in Japanese history, as it was the site of the final battle of the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877. The local hero Saigo Takamori is said to have made his last stand at Saigo Cave, located within the park.

From here we drive to Kanazawa and once there we will be visiting Kenrokuen Garden, considered one of Japan's three most beautiful gardens. Located next to Kanazawa Castle, the Maeda family, who ruled the Kaga Clan in feudal times, maintained the garden from generation to generation. From its scale and beauty, it is regarded as one of the most beautiful feudal lords' gardens in Japan.


The garden has a big artificial pond, hills and houses dotting the landscape. The big pond called "Kasumigaike" was compared to an open sea, and an island, on which an ageless hermit with miraculous power was believed to live, was constructed in the pond in hope of the long life and eternal prosperity of the lord. Kenrokuen, which means "having six factors", was given the name because of the six attributes that bring out the perfect landscape of the garden: spaciousness, tranquility, artifice, antiquity, water courses, and magnificent view from the garden.

There is a stone lantern designed in the image of the Japanese koto by the pond, which becomes the symbol of Kenrokuen Garden. There is a fountain created using the natural pressure of water flowing from the higher pond.

With spring in the air, enjoy the beauty of the flowers in bloom as you walk around.

From here, to our hotel for the evening, Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel, located in the heart of Kanazawa. Our arrival will be by 5:00pm and once checked in, the remainder of the evening is free. A variety of dining and shops are just steps away.



Accommodations: Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel  **free**

Day 7 – April 16th, 2019 Thursday– Kanazawa (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:15am as we are off on a full day of touring Kanazawa.

The morning begins with a visit to the Sakuda Gold and Silver Leaf Shop for a fun hands-on gold pasting experience. Dating back 400 years, gold leaf decorated goods are featured in all the city's souvenir shops. Traditional handicrafts still flourish here and perhaps nothing better expresses the local pride in workmanship and artistry than the use of gold leaf. This shop is one of the most popular specialty gold leaf shops.

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 alters.

Close by, Higashichaya Old Town, one of the most picturesque parts of Kanazawa. This district is a part of Japan untouched by time. Featuring rows of tea houses dating back hundreds of years, it is a living example of Japan's cultural past and a charming setting no matter what the Kanazawa weather.

Geisha and samurai once populated the district's Edo-era tea houses. While it is no longer possible to meet a samurai, Kanazawa is one of the few places in Japan where geisha still work. Along with the Gion area of Kyoto, it's one of only two geisha quarters nationally recognized for its cultural value.

Many craft shops ideal for souvenir shopping are in the area and visitors even see the interior of a tea house almost 200 years old, which exhibits the living quarters of 19th century geisha. The area is equally as stunning at night, when the teahouses are illuminated. As the sun sets, keep an eye out for geisha -approximately 50 are said to still work in the area.

Now, off to Omicho Market, Kanazawa's largest fresh food market dating back to the Edo Period. Today, it is a busy and colorful network of covered streets lined by about 200 shops and stalls. While most shops specialize in the excellent local seafood and produce, you can also find flowers, clothing, kitchen tools and more on sale.

Although the market is most exciting during the morning hours, it also gets quite busy around the lunch hour when locals and tourists arrive to have lunch at restaurants inside the market. Many of the restaurants here specialize in rice bowls topped with fresh Kanazawa seafood. Enjoy free time to explore and have lunch on your own.

In addition to seafood, Kanazawa is known for its sweet rice, nourished by frequent rainfall and natural mineral waters. It's no surprise then that the town also has three very well-established sake breweries. At Sake no Ohzawa Jizake Ichiba, a 100-year old shop here in Omicho Market, you can find their products. This shop is known to offer a range of local sake as well as local craft beers.

Our afternoon of touring begins with a visit to Nomura Family House and the Nagamachi Samurai District for a stroll.

Nomura Samurai House is an historic home and garden in Nagamachi, well-preserved district to the west of Kanazawa Castle. This was formerly the area where the samurai of Kanazawa lived with their families. Today the area looks pretty much the same as it did in the Edo era, with canals and cobbled streets that run between earthen tile-topped walls. Nomura Samurai House is one of the chief attractions in this district.

The house belonged to the Nomuras', a wealthy samurai family who served the ruling Maeda family from the 16th century until the end of the Edo period in the mid-19th century. At that time the old social class system ended, and many samurai houses were destroyed. The family also had to sell a lot of their property and this house began to fall into ruin. A wealthy businessperson named Kubo Hikobei bought this property in the early 20th century.

The drawing room of the current house is one that he had transferred here from an old house in a rural part of Ishikawa Prefecture. He also added a tearoom to the building. Today the house is owned by the city and has been beautifully restored so that visitors can enjoy a glimpse of samurai home life.

Inside you will find heirloom antiques and artifacts of the past: a suit of armor, beautifully painted fusuma screen doors, elegantly carved ranma transoms, and a ceiling paneled with cypress wood.

There is an inner garden also with stone lanterns, a small waterfall, and a pond stocked with colorful koi carp. Despite its relatively small size, this lush green garden was listed in 2003 by the Journal of Japanese Gardening as one of the three top gardens in Japan.

Many of the rooms of the house are arranged so that this garden can be viewed from different angles. Be sure to head up the old stone stairway at the back of the house to the second floor tearoom. There you can enjoy yet another view of the garden from above and feel the cool breeze over the rooftops.

Now for a stroll along the Nagamachi Samurai District, a beautifully preserved historic area of Kanazawa that was once the residential district for the city's samurai. It is a lovely area of canals and stone-flagged winding lanes that run between tile-topped earthen walls. Some of the former samurai houses and their gardens are also open for public viewing.

As you walk along here, it affords you a vivid idea of how city life was here a century or more ago.

From here, we return to our hotel, arrival by 4:00pm. Once back the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: Kanazawa Tokyu Hotel **free**

Day 8 – April 17th, 2020 Friday– Kanazawa-Tokyo (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we are off to Japan's capital, Tokyo. Our bags will be sent along separately and meet up with us later this evening.

The morning begins with a bullet train ride on the Kagayaki 508 departing at 9:46am and arrives at Ueno Station in Tokyo at 12:30pm. Once here, our bus will meet us, and we are off to lunch at a local restaurant.

Now, 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! Enjoy some free time here to explore on your own.

We also know of a great shop if you are looking for dried scallops or other fish items to bring back.



Ameyoko- best spot to find omiyage items

Now, off to our hotel for the next two nights, Sunshine City Prince in the Ikebukuro section of Tokyo. Our arrival will be by 4:00pm and after checking in, join your guide for a walking tour of all this area has to offer.

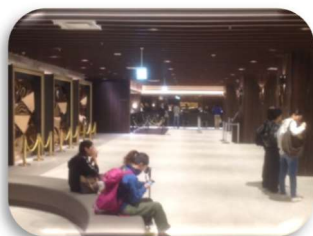
The lobby of the hotel connects to a huge shopping and entertainment mecca with four towers, including a 240-meter-high skyscraper with an observation deck on the top. Sunshine City is typically open from 10 am to 8 pm seven days a week. We are also less than a 10-minute walk from the Ikebukuro JR Station. The third floor of the mall is practically all restaurants and stays open until 9:30pm.

There is 24-hour Family Mart convenience store right off the lobby in case you would like to pick up food, snacks, or beverages. Within a 5-minute walk is a 24-hour supermarket, Seiyu, in case all you want is a light dinner bento to bring back to the room.

While most of the mall stores will be closing by 8:00pm, the third floor offers a variety of dining and the restaurants are typically open until 9:30pm.



Newly remodeled Sunshine City Prince Hotel & lobby



Family Mart in hotel lobby



Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel  **free**

Day 9 – April 18th, 2020 Saturday– Tokyo (B)

After breakfast, enjoy a complete free day in Tokyo to do whatever you please. There is still much to enjoy and quite a bit to do right at your doorstep.

Ikebukuro offers plenty of entertainment, shopping, and dining opportunities. It is the battle ground between the Tobu and Seibu conglomerates which operate large department stores on each side of the station. Recently it has also seen fierce competition from two of Japan's largest electronic retailers, Bic Camera and Yamada Denki.

Enjoy time at Sunshine City, a huge shopping mall connected to our hotel. It has four towers including a 240-meter-high skyscraper with an observation deck on the top. The main tower is the second highest building in Tokyo. The Sunshine City Prince Hotel is housed in one of the smaller towers at the complex. The lower levels of Sunshine City are a monstrous maze of shops and tourist attractions, as well as a theatre.

The tower's elevator is an attraction in itself, being the fastest in the world it takes only thirty-five seconds to reach the top. The highlight of the ride would have to be the illuminated dolphins and unicorns, ambient music and beautifully dressed lift operators making the trip to the top an interesting journey.

The center opened in 1978 and is Tokyo's oldest "City within a City". It sits on land that was once occupied by Sugamo Prison.

The Sunshine International Aquarium is a popular attraction where there are plenty of great underwater exhibits to entertain the whole family. There are the usual sharks, stingrays, tropical fish and sea life, but the most popular exhibits are the penguins, seals and sea otters which are well worth the entry fee. The aquarium sits on the 10th Floor, which gives it the title of the world's highest aquarium.

There are feedings at the aquarium every hour and one of the largest tanks holds over 120 tons of water. The seals do performances during the day.

Another great family attraction is the planetarium, where you can learn about the solar system and the universe. The Cosmic Safari takes visitors on a journey to see the wonders in outer space.

The Bunka Kaikan building is home to the Ancient Orient Museum which has an amazing collection of artifacts and is well worth a look.

The Sunshine City complex is also home to the Namco Namja Town. Namja Town is a collection of food theme parks and other interesting dining establishments. The centre has a series of kittens as mascots and there are plenty of them to choose from in the gift shop. Some of the food parks include Ice Cream City and the Tokyo Dessert Republic. Then for the Gyoza lover, there is Ikebukuro Gyoza stadium, the list goes on with dozens of tasty attractions. There is a small fee to enter the complex and then the fun begins. There are various carnival amusements at Namja town too, like a haunted house, merry-go-round, and video shooting games. Make sure you go hungry as there is so much to try across the two jammed packed floors of food and adventure.

One store no visitor to Japan should miss is Tokyu Hands, a shop that can only be described as a cross between a hardware store and a hobby shop. It is a great place for gift shopping, as many of the items for sale can't be found outside Japan. This store is one of their largest.



Accommodations: Sunshine Prince Hotel  **Free**

Day 10 – April 19th, 2019 Sunday- Tokyo-Narita (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am. While it may be our last day on tour, we have lots to see and do before our flight home later this evening.

The morning begins with a drive to Odaiba and enjoy quite an experience at TeamLab Borderless, a world of art without boundaries, a museum without a map. Immerse yourself in borderless art, this vast, complex, three-dimensional 10,000 square meter world. Wander, explore and discover.

From here we are off to Divercity Shopping Center where you can enjoy time for shopping and lunch on your own. Don't forget to take a moment and get a photo in front of the Gundam Statue. This new Unicorn Gundam is 24 meters in height whereas the original was only 18 meters.

We now make our way towards Narita with a stop at Narita-san Omotesando, the closest place to the airport where the good old days of Japan remain. This charming street offers all the flavors of a temple town. Take a leisurely stroll and peek into souvenir shops and food vendors that strike your fancy.

The first thing you notice as you walk along the street is the great number of establishments selling eel. Eel has been a Narita delicacy since the Edo Era. Just past the middle of the street is Kawatoyo where you can see staff filleting eel at the storefront. Walking through that smoky sweet aroma is also one of the things to look forward to.

Nagomi-no-Yoneya, an establishment opened in 1899 dealing in *kuri-yokan* (chestnut bean jelly) also operates a *yokan* museum at the back. The yokan with added fortune slips is quite unique. Elsewhere, there is the Saheiji Kawamura Store which has the famous Teppo-zuke pickles, the lone sake brewery on the street, Chomeisen, and other shops which have many of the most famous products in Japan.

As you walk around notice that some of the buildings here have existed since their construction in the Edo Era and which are still operating in the forms of the Onoya Inn and the Mitsunashi Pharmacy.

Finally, right at the end of Omotesando, you will arrive at the 1,000-year-old Naritasan temple.

Hawaiian Airlines #822 Departs Narita 9:00 pm – Arrive Honolulu 9:10am (same day)

