

Kanto's Fall Foliage Tour 2021



November 17th -24th, 2021



6nts/8days fr: \$2695 dbl/tpl \$3095 single



Maximum Tour size is 24 tour members!

Cancel for any reason up to 60 days prior-FULL REFUND!

Koyo, is the autumn season in Japan – where the leaves start to lose their green and people across the nation flock to enjoy the last few temperate days and sights of breathtaking foliage before winter sets in. Spending a day indulging in the array of colors brought on by the changing leaves is a pastime as old as the spring counterpart of viewing cherry blossoms.

Join us, won't you, as we capture the best of this region, a brand-new itinerary for 2019. Besides all the best of Tokyo, we have included visits to Takasaki, home to the #1 hot springs in Japan, Kusatsu Onsen and Matsumoto, famous for having one of Japan's most beautiful castles.

There is an onsen stay, 2 hands-on experiences, apple picking and daruma painting, Jigokudani Monkey Park, train ride and a complete free day in Tokyo!

From the incredible countryside fall vistas to some of Tokyo's best shopping streets, this tour is one you will not want to miss.

Itinerary/Details

Day 1 – November 17th, Wednesday – Depart from Honolulu

Hawaiian Airlines #863 Departs Honolulu 12:55 pm – Arrive Haneda 5:10pm +1

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

Day 2 – November 18th, Thursday – Haneda-Tokyo

After clearing Passport Control & Customs, meet our local English-speaking guide at the exit. The drive time to our Tokyo hale for the next two nights, the recently renovated Sunshine City Prince Ikebukuro. The drive time is approximately one hour.

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 10:00 am to 8:00 pm seven days a week. We are also less than a 10-minute walk from the Ikebukuro JR Station.

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 there is also a 24-hour supermarket, Seiyu.



Recently remodeled Sunshine City Prince Hotel & lobby



Family Mart in hotel lobby



Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel  **free**

Day 3 – November 19th, Friday – Tokyo (B/L)

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

After breakfast at our hotel, we will head out for a full day of touring. Please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am.

If you have 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. While the inner auction market has moved to a new location, the popular outer market remains so that you can shop and enjoy.

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 are a foodie, love markets, enjoy photography – or simply like visiting unique places – then you will probably love Tsukiji.

After a good stroll around the market, there is 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 do not feel like sushi, there are other options including ramen, *donburi* and more.



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 is 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 cannot 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 will 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 return to our hotel, arrival by 4:00pm and the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.

Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel



Day 4 – November 20th, Saturday – Tokyo-Takasaki-Kusatsu (B/L/D)

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

The morning begins with a drive to Takasaki, an often-forgotten city in Gunma Prefecture. With a population of just under 400,000, it offers all the comforts of a big Japanese city, a good mix of city and country life combined. It is also known as “Daruma Town”, for its manufacture of Takasaki Daruma dolls, and can boast of having the highest production quantity of these in all of Japan. Besides this, it is popularly known for its numerous Italian restaurants, and every year hosts the “King of Pasta” gourmet event. This has earned it its second nickname, “Pasta Town”. The drive time is approximately 2.5 hours and a rest stop will be made on the way.

Once here, we will be visiting Tokumeien Garden, considered one of the finest Japanese gardens in the Kanto region. Set in a valley next to Doukutsu Kannon Cave, the garden offers a waterfall, koi pond, zen and moss garden.

The garden is known for its unique rising and falling landscape, but it was built on what was originally an even slope. Earth dug out in the construction of the cave was used to create the garden's undulating quality.

In spring, it is full of azaleas, mountain cherries, and brilliant fresh verdure. In summer come the hydrangeas, and now in fall, **its glorious autumn leaves are renowned**. Enjoy time here to take in the beauty.

From here, lunch time and off to a local restaurant to enjoy a western style lunch.

Our afternoon begins with a visit to Daruma no Furusato Daimonya, a shop specializing in the handicraft of daruma beloved as talismans making wishes come true while carrying the spirit of persistence through the ups and downs of life. Besides observing the production of these daruma by skillful artisans we will enjoy a daruma painting hands-on experience. You can also purchase completed ones as a souvenir from Takasaki.

We now make our way to Kusatsu Onsen, one of Japan's most famous hot spring resorts. The drive time is approximately two hours and a rest stop will be made along the way.

Before going to our onsen for the evening, we end our touring day with a Yomomi and Dance Show. It is a short 30-minute performance, a unique opportunity to see local women stir the waters with large wooden

paddles to cool it down while singing folk songs. There is also the opportunity for you to try your hand at it if you care to.

Now, off to our hotel, Yorokobi no yada Takamatsu. This traditional Japanese inn surrounded by lush greenery and mountains is especially known for excellent indoor and outdoor baths. Our arrival will be by 5:15pm, followed by dinner at 6:30pm. After dinner, the remainder of the evening is free.

The Yubatake, (hot water field) is one of the resort's main sources of hot spring water. After bubbling to the surface at a temperature of more than 70 degrees Celsius, the hot spring water is cooled down in the yubatake's wooden conduits by a few degrees before it gets distributed to the various ryokan and public baths.



Accommodations: Yorokobi no yada Takamatsu free- Japanese style rooms

Day 5 – November 21st, Sunday – Kusatsu-Matsumoto (B/L)

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

The morning begins with a drive to Jigokudani Monkey Park, home of the world-famous "snow monkeys". Over 160 Japanese Macaque monkeys inhabit the area and despite the harsh conditions (snow-covered for one-third of the year) and the rough cliffs and hot springs bursting from the ground, the area is paradise for the monkeys. The reason is that same hot spring water collects in pools that the monkeys enjoy bathing in. The drive time is approximately 2-hours and we will make a rest stop along the way.

You will be able to enjoy this unique experience of seeing wild monkeys' bathing in a natural hot spring. The monkeys live in large social groups, and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions. Accustomed to humans, the monkeys can be observed from very close and almost completely ignore their human guests.

Lunch time is approaching, and we are off to a local restaurant for a Japanese style lunch followed by an always fun hands-on experience, apple picking at a local farm.

From here, we journey to Matsumoto, the second largest city in the Nagano Prefecture and most famous for Matsumotojo, one of Japan's most beautiful original castles. The drive time is approximately 1.5 hours and a rest stop will be made along the way.

Accommodations for tonight are at the Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel, a short walk from Matsumoto Castle and the popular shopping streets of Nawate and Nakamachi. Some of the rooms offer a view of the castle while others allow for a grand view of the Japan Alps.

Our arrival will be by 5:30pm and once checked-in, the remainder of the evening is free. A wide variety of shops and dining options just steps from our hotel.



Accommodations: Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel free

Day 6 – November 22nd, Monday – Matsumoto-Tokyo (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:15am for a full touring day, our destination, Japan's capital, Tokyo. Our luggage will be transported separately by truck and meet up with us later today in Tokyo.

The morning begins with a visit to Matsumoto Castle, one of Japan's premier historic castles, 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.

The contrasting black and white plaster of the exterior stands out boldly against the magnificent backdrop of the Japanese Alps. Built with many unique architectural elements, Matsumoto Castle also features a moon viewing pavilion, indicative of the lifestyle of the feudal lords. If you look over the moat, you can see the beautiful reflection of the castle with blazing red leaves on the surface of the water. **Enjoy the fall colors!**

Now to enjoy time at Nawate dori, a nice old fashion shopping street close by to the castle. Lined with around 50 shops that vary from antique dealers and 'dagashi' candy stores to stylish bakeries and designer boutiques, the frog-themed street makes a great place to stroll when seeing the castle. Walking along you will experience the feel of city's history as a castle town.

Lunch time, Japanese style at the Ishii Miso Factory. 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.

After lunch and a factory tour, maybe enjoy a cone of miso ice cream and/or time to browse their gift shop for miso items.

We now make our way to the Matsumoto Station for the limited express train to Tokyo departing on the Azusa 20 at 1:45pm and arriving at Tokyo's Shinjuku Station at 4:34pm. We will be met by our charter bus for the transfer over to our hotel.

Accommodations for the last two nights on tour are back at the Sunshine City Prince Hotel, in Ikebukuro.



Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel **Wi-Fi** free

Day 7 – November 23rd, Monday – Tokyo (B)

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

The morning begins with a visit to Meiji Jingu Gaien, a 300-meter-long avenue for a stroll under the tunnel of golden yellow foliage created by 146 ginkgo trees. It is considered one of the most beautiful places in Tokyo for autumn foliage with its stunning yellow colors. Today we are going to enjoy time at the Ginkgo Festival, a 300-meter-long ginkgo-lined avenue at Meiji Jingu Gaien, celebrated spot for **admiring fall foliage**.

Adding to the event's popularity are temporary stalls selling noted products from different regions of Japan as well food and drinks. As today is a national holiday, the festival will have quite a few local folks enjoying the foliage and festivities as well.

This afternoon we are off for quite an experience, a visit to Shibuya Scramble Square, recently open November 1st, 2019. This 230-meter tower overlooks famous Shibuya Scramble Crossing and on top, Shibuya Sky, an observatory offering a 360-degree view of Tokyo.

Shibuya Crossing and shopping area is rumored to be the world's busiest, this intersection in front of Shibuya Station is famously known as 'The Scramble'. It is an awesome spectacle of giant video screens and neon, guaranteed to give you a 'Wow – I'm in Tokyo!' feeling. People come from all directions at once – sometimes

over a thousand with every light change – yet still manage to dodge each other with a practiced, nonchalant agility.

From the 46th floor Sky Stage, enjoy many of Tokyo's landmarks, the New National Stadium, Shinjuku, Tokyo Tower, Tokyo Skytree and Tokyo Bay. Should we be blessed with a clear weather day, there's even a special spot to view and photograph Mt. Fuji.

We will also be visiting for a brief photo stop at the Hachiko Dog statute, Tokyo's most famous pooch, Hachikō. This Akita dog came to Shibuya Station every day to meet his master, a professor, returning from work. After the professor died in 1925, Hachikō continued to come to the station daily until his own death nearly 10 years later. The story became legend, and a small statue was erected in the dog's memory in front of Shibuya Station.

We now make our way to the antenna shops in Yurakucho. Local governments have created these shops to promote their regions through food, souvenirs, and tourist information. Represented regions include Hokkaido, Kansai, Akita, Aomori, and Okinawa. Enjoy free time here to shop and lunch on your own.

Now, back to our hotel, arrival by 4:30pm and the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: Sunshine City Prince Hotel  **free**

Day 8 – November 24th, Wednesday – Tokyo (B)

After breakfast, enjoy a complete free day to sightsee on your own, shop until you drop or maybe, a combination of both. In any case, we have a late check-out from the hotel.

Please meet in the lobby by 4:00pm as we bid Tokyo good-bye and make our way to the Haneda Airport for the flight home.

Hawaiian Airlines #864 Departs Haneda 8:05 pm – Arrive In Honolulu 8:15 pm

