

Kyushu Cherry Blossom Tour 2022
Hanami – The cherry blossom season is coming soon!

MARCH 26TH – April 3rd, 2022, 



The beauty of Japan during the **Cherry Blossom Season** is breathtaking.

7nts/9days from: \$3295 triple \$3395 double \$3795 single
Cancel for any reason up to 60 days prior-FULL REFUND!

Maximum Tour size is 24 tour members!

In the mountains, parks along riverfronts and city street, in school yards.....

From late March through the entire month of April, it's the season of the cherry that tinges Japanese islands in delicate shades of pink. The blossoms that signal the end of winter and the arrival of spring have more than a symbolic presence in Japan's floral culture.

A long, long time ago, the cherry tree was revered as a "dwelling of the gods"; when in full bloom, people offered sake and food to its splendor in exchange for a good harvest. Today every village, town and city lets business-as-usual slide to indulge in days of *hanami*, flower viewing parties, with friends, family, and co-workers.

Of course, there's far more to cherry blossoms. Join us as we are off to the region of Kyushu exploring Hakata, Yanagawa, Karatsu, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Kirishima, Kagoshima and Beppu. This tour includes a ferry ride, bullet train, two onsen nights, a complete free last day for shopping, and so much more!

It is the perfect balance, sightseeing with free time for shopping. Do leave room in your bags for those favorite omiyages!

Itinerary/Details

Day 1 – March 26th, 2022, Saturday – Depart from Honolulu

Hawaiian Airlines #827 Departs Honolulu 1:05 pm – Arrive Fukuoka 6:40 pm +1

Please meet your Panda Travel representative at the Hawaiian Airlines check-in counters located in Terminal 2, Lobby 4, a minimum of 3 hours prior to the departure time.

Day 2 – March 27th, 2022, Sunday – Hakata

After clearing customs, we will be met by our local guide and then the short bus ride to our hotel for the next two nights, Hotel Clio Court Hakata, adjacent to the JR Hakata Station.

Location, hard to find a more convenient spot, just steps from so many dining and shopping options. After checking in, the remainder of the evening is free.

Welcome to Fukuoka, Kyushu's largest city and Japan's sixth largest. It's made up of two former towns, the Fukuoka castle town on the west bank of the Naka-gawa and Hakata on the east. The two towns merged in 1889 as Fukuoka, though the name Hakata is still widely in use. As an example, it's Fukuoka Airport but Hakata Station.

Whatever you call it; this youthful, user-friendly metropolis has a cosmopolitan charm, peppered with the flavors of its Asian neighbors. Hakata traces its trading history back some 2000 years, which continues today with visitors from Seoul and Shanghai. Among Japanese, the city is famed for its 'Hakata *bijin*' (beautiful women), SoftBank Hawks's baseball team and hearty Hakata ramen.

If Fukuoka doesn't burst with sights like Tokyo or Kyoto, its friendly atmosphere, warm weather, and contemporary attractions – art, architecture, shopping, and cuisine – make up for it



Hotel Clio Court Hakata



Hakata JR Station



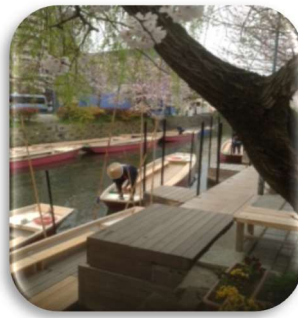
Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata  **free**

Day 3 – March 28th, 2022, Monday – Hakata-Yanagawa-Hakata (B/L)

After breakfast at our hotel, please meet up with your guide by 9:00 am. This morning we journey to Yanagawa, a nostalgic town with the vestiges of its days as a castle town. Yanagawa Castle was built around 1588 and called the “Water Castle” at that time. The reason for this was the water-filled moats crisscrossing the town.

Often called "the city of water" and "the Venice of Kyushu" because of its 470 kilometers of canals, which were originally built as irrigation channels, Yanagawa now offers slow, scenic cruises down the canals in flatboats known as donkobune, poled along by boatmen in traditional wear.

To truly understand the city, we will experience the network of waterways aboard one of its characteristic donkobune boats. Sit back and enjoy the scenery as our boatman with a bamboo-fiber hat on his head deftly maneuvers our wooden dinghy down Yanagawa's watery boulevards with his more than 2-meter bamboo pole to steer and power us along. The cruise is approximately 70 minutes in length. Enjoy this **cherry blossom viewing spot**.



Next, we will be visiting Yanagawa Tachibana-tei Ohana, the former residence of the Tachibana family, a clan of feudal lords during the Sengoku and Edo periods. Its garden, the Shotoen, was designated as a national site of natural beauty, where there are about 280 pine trees that have been standing for 200 to 300 years.

Ohana was built as a villa where the feudal lord of Yanagawa could relax and spend quiet time with his family. Within the grounds of the estate stands the Western-style house, Seiyōkan, built to entertain guests and the Japanese-style great hall Ōhiroma along with the viewing garden. Ohana is certainly a place where you can appreciate the blend of Western and Japanese styles.

The Japanese-style garden was built to resemble Matsushima, one of the Three Views of Japan, elegantly established with 280 black pines, 1500 garden stones and 14 stone lanterns centering around a pond. It is a decorative garden that is enjoyed for its panoramic view from the great hall.

From here, off to enjoy a Japanese style lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we will be visiting Maizuru Park, built around Fukuoka castle ruins and well known for its **cherry viewing spot** and other seasonal plants and flowers.

This is the best time to visit the castle ruins, when Maizuru Park turns into the best cherry blossom viewing spot, with over 1,000 cherry trees planted here. There are several walking paths lined with cherry trees so that you can experience and enjoy a walk through a tunnel of flowers.

Our touring day now complete and we will return to our hotel, arrival by 4:30pm. Once back, the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata  **free**

Day 4 – March 29th, 2022, Tuesday – Hakata-Karatsu-Nagasaki (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 8:00am as we make our way to Nagasaki later this afternoon.

The morning begins with a drive to Saga, a small prefecture on Kyushu Island. The prefecture's best-known tourist attraction is its pottery, especially the pottery from the town of Arita.

Once here, we will be visiting Karatsu Castle, built in 1608. Facing the sea, it is also known as Maizuru (Dancing Crane) Castle as it resembles the figure of a bird with its wings spread wide as there is a pine grove extending left to right and because its donjon (tower keep) is thought to look like the head of a crane.

Its cherry blossom time and we are here to also enjoy **viewing the 500 cherry trees** and wisteria flowers in full bloom.

Next, we are visiting China on the Park where you can experience pottery and porcelain designs. This establishment dates to the end of the last century when the Fukugawa factory was chosen to provide the Imperial household with porcelain. This large and modern style facility contains a factory, galleries, shops, and a restaurant. It is here that we will enjoy our lunch.

Now, on our way to Nagasaki, a stop at the Kasutera (Honey Cake) Factory in Isahaya. Now a specialty of Nagasaki, the cake was brought by way of Portuguese merchants in the 16th century. The name is derived from Portuguese Pao de Castela, meaning “bread from Castile”.

This popular Japanese sponge cake is made from 4 basic ingredients-sugar, eggs, bread flour and honey.

It has assumed a distinctly light Japanese flavor and texture over the centuries. They are available several flavors such as honey, chestnut, and green tea. Enjoy tasting and as well, a great omiyage gift giving item.



Kasutera (Honey Cake) Factory

Now, on our way to Nagasaki, arriving at our hotel, Hotel New Nagasaki at approximately 4:30pm. After checking in, the remainder of the evening is free. Our hotel is ideally located, just a short walk to the JR Nagasaki Station. You are just steps away from a variety of shopping and dining options.



Accommodations: Hotel New Nagasaki  **free**

Day 5 – March 30th, 2022, Wednesday – Nagasaki-Shimabara-Kumamoto-Kirishima (B/L/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:00am as we are off on a full day of touring.

Nagasaki which suffered the same fate as Hiroshima in August 1945, the bombing on August 9th was the last major act of WWII and within days the Japanese had surrendered.

It's both unfortunate – and important – that the name Nagasaki is synonymous with the dropping of the atomic bomb. Unquestionably, this history overshadows everything else, yet today Nagasaki is a vibrant, charming, and unique gem that begs to be explored far beyond the bomb museums, monuments, and memorials. Not that the WWII history can be overlooked or denied: it's as much a part of the city's fabric as the hilly landscape and cobblestones. A visit to the scenes of atomic devastation is necessary, but you'll find that this welcoming, peaceful city boasts a colorful trading history, alluring churches, shrines, temples, and an East-meets-West culinary scene, prettily set within around a gracious harbor.

Nagasaki has been rebuilt on the rubble and ashes of the old city. Set against a hillside overlooking a great natural harbor, Nagasaki is now a sprawling city of 440,000 on the southern island of Kyushu. Temples and mansions set among gardens on the hill preside over the bustle of office buildings and noodle shops on the winding streets below. Most of Nagasaki's historical sites and monuments are within walking distance of the center of the city, while a couple of miles away on the other side of town is a cluster of sights related to the bombing, including the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, which gives powerful testimony to one of the pivotal events of the 20th century.

Our morning begins with a visit to the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park and Museum, built on a low hill to the north of the hypocenter of the atomic bomb blast. It was created to represent the wish for world peace and a vow that such a tragic war would never be repeated. The park features the 9.7-meter-high Peace Statue symbolizing the Nagasaki citizens' wish for peace. Sculptor Seibou Kitamura, a Nagasaki native, created this statue as a symbol of the divine love and mercy of Buddha.

The raised right-hand points to the heavens to signify the threat of atomic weapons while the left arm is raised horizontally to represent the wish for peace. The figure's eyes are lightly closed in prayer for the souls of the atomic bomb victims. Every year on August 9, the anniversary of the atomic bombing, a peace memorial ceremony is conducted in front of this statue and a peace declaration is made to the people of the world. The park also features the Fountain of Peace, which was built in remembrance of a little girl who wandered in search of water. Visitors can also view a row of monuments contributed by various nations that form the zone of symbols of world peace.



Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park and Museum

From here we are traveling to Shimabara, drive time approximately two hours. Once here we will be having a Japanese style lunch at a local restaurant by Michi-no-eki (road station). Mizunashi Honjin Fukae is a park located at one of the affected sites of the eruption of Mt. Unzen in 1991, which left an avalanche of earth, debris, and volcanic ashes around the area. The park was created as a reminder to future generations of the damage left by the volcanic catastrophe. It houses a volcanic museum, and the site of 11 houses half-buried under a pile of debris and pyroclastic flow from Fugendake, one of the Mt. Unzen's highest peaks.

You will have some free time here to walk around this area and view the houses that are buried.

From here, off to Shimabara Port for a ferry ride over to Kumamoto. Our bus will be traveling along with us on the ferry and once over we are off to our hotel for the evening, Kirishima Hotel.

Our arrival will be by 5:00pm. Enjoy time to relax and freshen up before a Japanese dinner at 6:30pm. Our accommodations are at an onsen hotel and you can enjoy the onsen before and after dinner as well tomorrow morning before our departure.



Accommodations: Kirishima Hotel  **free- Japanese style rooms**

Day 6 – March 31st, 2022, Thursday – Kirishima-Kagoshima-Kumamoto (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am. **Our bags will be sent separately by truck, and you will need to prepare a small overnight bag for the next two days.**

The morning begins with a short drive to Kogoshima to visit Kirishima Shrine, built during the Muromachi Period on a different site from where it stands today. Since then it has been destroyed numerous times by volcanic eruptions, but always rebuilt. The current shrine was constructed in 1715 where it survives to this day. Its large, beautiful buildings are surrounded by forest and have been declared important cultural property.

It is often referred to as "The Nikko of the West" in comparison with the gorgeous architectural style of Nikko Toshogu in Tochigi. Columns and joists are vermilion lacquered and decorated with many richly-colored reliefs.

While more famous for autumn leaves, Kirishima Shrine is just as beautiful in the springtime when cherry blossoms surround the complex. Enjoy a pleasant walk to the shrine while **viewing the cherry blossoms.**

According to Japanese myths, Ninigi no Mikoto, grandson of the queen of gods Amaterasu, governed the area, which is now attracting attention as a location with strong mystical energy in recent years. Especially a sacred tree that has lived 800 years is said to be the ancestor of Japanese cedars across southern Kyushu and believed to have great powers to answer prayers.

From here we are off to visit the Senganen and Shoko Assemble Museum. The building was originally built as a steel factory for Lord Shimadzu in 1856. Objects from the 700-year history of the Shimadzu family, the war between Satsuma and England and traditional industries like Satsuma cut glass are on display. At the cut glass factory next to the museum, you can see the work and beauty of Satsuma glass. Enjoy free time here to explore.

Next, a visit to Ichibangai Shopping Street Iddo, the closest shopping street to Kagoshima Chuo Station, and has been loved by the locals for ages. There are many souvenir and food shops to choose from in this area. Enjoy free time here to browse and have lunch on your own.

At the Kagoshima Sightseeing Souvenir Center, karukan, satsuma-age, tsubotsuke pickles, shocho, and many other items can be found. And at Amamidori Yoshimi Sangyo, you can find island miso and other specialty products from Amami Oshima.

This covered arcade is quite popular with residents who come here to do their daily shopping. Enjoy the opportunity to experience the everyday life of the Japanese as you shop for souvenirs.

From here, off to the Kagoshima Chuo Station for our bullet train to Kumamoto, Sakura 406 that departs at 3:30pm and arrives at 4:34pm. Once there we will walk to our hotel, The New Hotel Kumamoto, just about a minutes' walk away.

You will find a variety of shops and dining options steps from the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: The New Hotel Kumamoto **free**

Day 7 – April 1st, 2022, Friday – Kumamoto-Yufuin (B/L/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:00am as we are off on a full day of touring.

The morning begins with a visit to Kumamoto Castle, also known as "Ginnan Castle", is one of the most impressive castles in Japan. With its large castle grounds and a variety of buildings, Kumamoto Castle offers its visitors one of the most complete castle experiences in Japan.

Japanese statesman and naval engineer, Katsu Kaishu, once stated; "there is no other castle like this castle", praising its intimidating size and height.

Unfortunately, the castle suffered serious damage in the 2016 earthquake and the inner grounds are closed off to the public; however, we can enjoy looking from the outside at this massive fortress. Sadly, the complete restoration may take up to 20 years. Enjoy not only the photo opportunity but also this beautiful **cherry blossom viewing spot** with up to 800 cherry trees planted on the grounds.

Just down the hill from the castle is Saukra no Baba, an area filled with shops, restaurants and museums detailing the history of Kumamoto that we will be visiting next. It is here that we will also be having lunch at a local restaurant.

Next, off to see the famous sakura tree come alive in Isshingyo Park. This o-zakura ("big cherry tree") is said to be over 400 years old. And it's not just the age that's impressive: this grand old tree is 46 ft. high, 69 ft. across from east to west and 85 ft. across from south to north, with a trunk circumference of 23 ft.

The *o-zakura* is dedicated to a feudal warlord named Nakamura Hokinokami Korefuyu, who fell defending Yazaki Castle. After his defeat, his remaining descendants and vassals returned in secret to his hometown, then known as Munemura, and planted sakura seeds on this site. As they performed the task with a single heart, or *issin*, and embraced the Buddhist volitional principle of *gyo* (*saṅkhāra*), the tree is called Isshingyo no O-zakura.

This park is considered as one of the top spots in Japan for **cherry blossom viewing**. Enjoy some free time here to explore.

We are now off to Yufuin and the drive time is approximately two hours. Once here we will check in to our hotel for the evening, Yufuin Sansuikan, an onsen property. Our arrival will be by 4:30pm and dinner is scheduled for 6:00pm.

This onsen is just a short eight-minute walk from the JR Yufuin Station. It features open-air hot-spring baths with Mount Yufu views. You will have time to enjoy the onsen before and after dinner and as well before our departure in the morning.



Accommodations: Yufuin Sansuikan free- Japanese style rooms

Day 8 – April 2nd, 2022, Saturday – Kumamoto-Beppu-Hakata (B/L)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we are off on another full day of touring and ending back where we began, Hakata.

The morning begins with a visit to Beppu Jigoku Meguri or “Hell Tour” of eight Beppu hot spring locations where fumarolic steams and gases explode out of the ground. The name, Jigoku (hell), was derived from the fact that the site is unapproachable, because of fumarolic gas of around 100 degrees. Thermal mud and hot springs have been gushing tremendously from the ground for over 1,000 years. These eight jigokus consist of the cobalt blue ocean hell, ‘Umijigoku’, deep-red blood pond hell ‘Chi-no Ike Jigoku’ as well as ‘Oniishi Bozu Jigoku’ (Onishi Shaven Head Hell), ‘Yama Jigoku’ (Mountain Hell), ‘Kamado Jigoku’ (Boiling Hell), ‘Oniyama Jigoku’ (Demon Mountain Hell), ‘Shiraike Hell’ (White Pond Hell) and ‘Tatsumaki Jigoku’ (Geyser Hell).

Its onsen eggs (eggs boiled in the hot spring) and ‘Jigoku Mushi-yaki Pudding’ (Pudding steamed in the Hell) are popular items to try here.

Next, lunch at a local restaurant and then we make our way back to Hakata with a stop at Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Fukuoka, where more than 2 million people visit during the first three days of New Year. In this shrine, Sugawara-no Michizane, an excellent poet, particularly in Chinese poetry in the late 9th century, is enshrined as the god of academic achievements. During the entrance exam season, young people from all parts of Japan preparing for these examinations and their parents come to the shrine to pray for success and academic achievement.

Michizane passed away in Dazaifu in 903, just a few years after being sent into exile. Shortly after his death the country was ravaged by natural disasters, and people came to believe that the calamities were caused by the wrathful spirit of Michizane, still angered by his unjust treatment. Offerings were made to the spirit of Michizane and the tradition of Tenmangu Shrines was begun. The Tenmangu Shrine in Dazaifu was built on the site of his grave.

The entire length of the approach is lined with shops that cater to the shrine's visitors. The shrine is rather large, stretching about 250 meters from one end to the other. After passing through the torii gate at the entrance, visitors will come across a pond that was built in the shape of the Japanese character for "heart". A path leads across two arched bridges and islands which represent the past, present and future.

Usually, by the time cherry blossoms begin to bloom at Dazaifu Tenmangu, the plum blossoms have already finished. If, however, the plum blossoms are late to bloom, you will get to experience the rare sight of 6,000 plum trees and dozens of cherry trees- in bloom alongside each other. Do not miss this famous **cherry blossom viewing spot**.

Arrival at our hotel, Hotel Clio Court will be approximately 5:30pm and the remainder of the afternoon and evening are free.



Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata free

Day 9 – April 3rd, 2022, Sunday– Hakata-Fukuoka Airport (B)

After breakfast, enjoy a free day to catch up on your last-minute shopping or sightseeing. We have arranged for a late check-out from our rooms. You will have access to your rooms until we depart.

Please meet your guide in the lobby by 5:00pm as we make our way to the airport to begin our check-in for the flight home.

Hawaiian Airlines #828 Departs Fukuoka 8:40 pm – Arrive in Honolulu 9:40 am