

Kyushu Foliage & **KURISUMASU SHOPPING** Weekender

November 22nd – 27th, 2022



4nts/6days from: \$2350 tpl; \$2395 dbl and \$2495 sgl

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



Maximum Tour size is 24 tour members!

Wind chimes and icy colors are essential in summer. Then its autumn, when a host of goodies are harvested one after the other. Autumn in Japan is magnificent. It may even be more visually stunning than the cherry blossoms of spring, maybe.

This Kyushu foliage and Kurisumasu shopping weekend brings out the very best of this region, unique foliage viewing spots and holiday illuminations to get you in the spirit. We begin and end in one of Kyushu's favorite cities, Hakata offering just enough night life and great shopping. In addition, there are visits to Hita, Saiki, and two famous hot spring towns, Beppu and Yufuin district.

Foliage viewing includes a walk along Hakata's Gion Area and the Great Buddha of Fukuoka, the beautiful Usuki Stone Buddhas, the 1300-year-old Chinoike-Jigoku hot spring, and a ride on the Yufuin sightseeing train.

There is so much more, a sake brewery visit, Saiki Fish Market, teamLab Forest, a digital art collective, and Fukuoka Tower. Enjoy Kurisumasu shopping by the Hakata JR station and Tenjin Area, Kyushu's number one shopping area. More yet, as we visit Mameda Machi, and LaLaport Fukuoka, a new shopping mall. In the evening, stroll over to the front side of the Hakata JR station for holiday illuminations!

Itinerary/Details

Day 1 – November 22nd, 2022, Tuesday – Depart from Honolulu

Hawaiian Airlines #449 Departs Honolulu 12:55 pm – Arrive Fukuoka 6:40 pm +1

Please meet your Panda Travel representative at the Hawaiian Airlines check-in area, Terminal 2, Lobby 4, Makai side a least 3 hours prior to the flight departure time

Day 2 – November 23rd, 2022, Wednesday – Fukuoka-Hakata

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

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' baseball team and hearty Hakata ramen.

Hakata may not burst with sights like Tokyo or Kyoto, but its friendly atmosphere, warm weather, and contemporary attractions – art, architecture, shopping, and cuisine – make up for it.

As far as our hotel location, it is difficult to find a more convenient spot, just steps from so many dining and shopping options.

The remainder of the evening is free.



Hotel Clio Court Hakata along with breakfast room

directly in front of the JR Station



Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata  **free**

Day 3 – November 24th, 2022, Thursday – Hakata (B)

After breakfast at our hotel, please meet in the lobby by 8:50am as we are off to discover Hakata.

Our morning begins short drive to the Gion Area for a walking beginning at Tochoji Temple. Completed in the year 806, it is one of the oldest still intact Buddhist temples in Japan. Founded and dedicated to the famous Buddhist preacher Kukai, the shrines main attraction is the gigantic Buddha statue. Weighing some 30 tons, it is the largest seated wooden image of Buddha in all of Japan. While the statue isn't particularly old, being carved in 1992, it is still quite impressive.

Under the Buddha, you will find a big surprise, a walk-through Heaven and Hell. As you face the statue, there is a small passageway that you can enter. It takes you past several impressive, but scary art works depicting the suffering of people in hell. And then, it leads to a narrow, very dark, winding corridor to the exit. Try and spot the “buddhas ring”, as this is supposed to help you to the promised land. Don't miss the last artwork, depicting heaven, at the end of the hall. It is supposed to be a symbol that you can reach heaven through darkness with the help of the Buddha.

Close-by, the bright red five-storied pagoda and then Kushida Shrine, said to have been founded in 757, it is one of the oldest shrines in Fukuoka. While not extensive, there are a few notable things to look out for, a towering ginkgo tree, said to be over 1,000 years-old and some unusual Tengu masks.

From here, a visit to the Hakata Machiya Folk Museum, to learn some of this ancient city's history. Hakata is one of Japan's oldest cities and served as a link to continental Asia in pre-modern times. While the museum is small, it remains well worth the visit. See a sample of traditional architecture and an exhibition hall with all beautiful artefacts that help illuminate the history of this fascinating city.

We are now off the Tenjin Area, Kyushu's number one downtown shopping area. Enjoy free time to explore, shop, and have lunch on your own. The streets are lined with fashionable brands side by side with traditional shops and department stores.

There is an additional underground shopping mall that stretches for about 600 meters, 12 avenues with at least 150 various shops. We will remain here for two hours so that you have time to leisurely explore.

This afternoon, a visit at Ishikura Sake Brewery, the only local sake brewery in Hakata. This is one of Japan's largest sake rice growing regions, including Yamada Nishiki, the gold standard of sake rice. Ishikura brews their sake in small lots and is considered a craft brewery. Enjoy time to explore their gift shop for unique items only found here.

Now, back to our hotel, arrival by 3:15pm and the remainder of the evening is free. While our hotel is located on the back end of the Hakata Station, it is just a couple minutes to the front side where many popular shops and department stores are located, included Daiso, Yodobashi Camera, Tokyu Hands, and Hankyu Department store. The train station offers so, so many omiyage item ideas. Even if you do not buy today no worries as we will be back.

This evening, walk over to the from of the station to enjoy the holiday illuminations!



Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata  **free**

Day 4 – November 25th, 2022, Friday – Hakata-Hita-Saiki-Beppu (B/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am as we are off on a full day of touring. Please prepare a small overnight bag as our larger pieces will remain at the hotel.

The morning begins with a drive to Oita, an unspoiled area of Japan with rich artistic and spiritual heritage along with natural wonders like Yabakei Gorge and Beppu hot springs. The drive time is approximately one hour.

Our day begins with a visit to the town of Mameda in Hita City. Come, join our guide for a stroll along Mameda Machi, the area lined with traditional shops, houses, and souvenir shops. This area is commonly referred to as Kyushu's little Kyoto. Enjoy free time to explore and shop.

From here, we journey off to Sakai City, a port city which boasts the widest range of fresh fish found anywhere in Japan. We will be visiting Saiki Market, a fish market that sits directly in front of the port. Here, they sell fresh, local seafood as well as dried fish, produce, confectionaries, and marine products.

Enjoy free time to browse, shop and have lunch on your own. With a variety of restaurants to choose from, enjoy a gozen meal (a traditional meal set accompanied by soup, rice, and side dishes). You will also find donburi and seafood tempura rice bowls. The word is out that the clam miso soup and grilled mackerel bentos are ono.

What to shop for. A popular item is the dried horse mackerel. We are told, best served with tare, a multipurpose glaze and dipping sauce. It consists of soy sauce, sake, brown sugar, and sweet mirin.

This afternoon, our touring takes us to the city of Usuki to visit the Usuki Sekibutsu, a collection of stone Buddhas sculptured into a cliff. In Japan, Buddha statues are usually made of wood or metal. Stone statues are rarer, and Usuki's are the only stone Buddhas in Japan to be designated as a national treasure.

These beautiful statues, more than 60 of them were created around the late Heian Period by hardened volcanic ash and molten rock that erupted from Mt. Aso. Who carved them and why is unknown.

Now, off to Beppu, one of Japan's most famous hot spring resorts, producing more hot spring water than any other resort in the country. The drive time is approximately 1 hour. Accommodations for the evening are at Suginoi Hotel Honkan, located hilltop in Kankaji hot spring area, one of eight hot spring areas in Beppu. Enjoy stunning views looking out to Shikoku Island over Beppu Bay. On your free time, enjoy the onsen and heated pool.

Our arrival will be by 5:15pm, followed by dinner at 6:30pm.



Accommodations: Suginoi Hotel Honkan  **free (single/twin-western room, triple-Japanese western room)**

Day 5 – November 26th, 2022, Saturday – Beppu-Yufuin-Hakata (B/L)

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

Our touring day begins with a visit to Chinoike-Jigoku, Japan's oldest hot spring. Chinoike Jigoku has existed for more than 1300 years, and as such remains an incredible rarity. Because of the high temperatures of the hot spring's water, bathing is not permitted.

The main point of interest for Chinoike Jigoku is its unique appearance; strikingly red is if the hot spring were from hell itself. Heated red mud containing iron oxide, magnesium oxide, and similar materials is ejected from the depths below the water, creating this vivid red color. The red mud of this hot spring has been used in medicine and dyes.

From here, a short drive to Yufuin district, a famous hot spring area dominated by one main street. Enjoy time to wander along and stopping for peeks into the stores and restaurants that line both sides of the area. You can find lunch here or wait a bit as we will have a bento box lunch on board our next adventure, a resort train ride to Hakata.

The Yufuin no mori is a luxurious train that travels between Yufuin Station and Hakata. We will depart at 12:07pm and arrive at the Hakata Station at 2:20pm. A bento box lunch is included today. On arrival at the Hakata Station, we will walk over to our hotel.

The interior of the train is mostly decorated in a traditional wooden style with green carpet and seats, to reflect the relaxing nature of Yufuin and the surrounding mountain forests. There is a lounge and bar on board, where you can enjoy viewing the landscape pass by or try one of the exclusive drinks and snacks sold on the train. Yufuin green tea tasting is said to be a must do.

Sit back and enjoy the wonderful Kyushu landscape, the blue Minou Mountains followed by a background of rolling hills. Along the mountainous terrain, the route follows a riverbed that provides many scenic views, including the Jion-no-taki Waterfalls. Keep your camera ready! **Enjoy fall colors!**

After check-in at our hotel, the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free.



Accommodations: Hotel Clio Court Hakata  **free**

Day 6 – November 27th, 2022, Sunday – Hakata-Fukuoka (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am. It may be our last day on tour, but there is still more to see and do before our flight home this evening.

The morning begins with a visit to Fukuoka Tower, the seaside tower along Hakata Bay. This modern landmark boasts as being Japan's tallest seaside tower. Covered with 8,000 mirrored panels, it is a standout in the city's skyline.

While here, enjoy time to explore first floor shops and stalls, catering to the needs of Omiyage fanatics! Then, a visit to Lover's Sanctuary, a hotspot for couples and lovers. Purchase a lock, designed with a romantic message, and lock it onto the tower's framework. For all the romantics out there, an opportunity to lock in your love forever!

Now, off to the observatory, high above the city's skyline. It is the tallest seaside tower in Japan, towering 234-meters above sea level. With as many as 8,000 mirrors and its triangular shape, it is known as the "Mirror Sail". The panoramic view is simply fantastic.

We are now off to teamlab Forest, a digital art collective. This museum is a dazzling facility featuring two main areas, an Athletics Forest and a Catching and Collecting Forest-based on the concept of exploring and studying nature.

Seven of the ten exhibits are exclusive to this venue and some of the artworks are continuously updated to reflect the changing seasons.

The Athletics Forest is a new physical creative space that trains spatial awareness based on the concept of understanding the world through the body and thinking of the world three-dimensionally. Use your body in this complex, three-dimensional space and immerse yourself in an interactive world.

The Catching and Collecting Forest is a new learning space based on the concept of Catch, Study, Release, in which people explore the world with their bodies, discovering, catching, and broadening their interests based on what they catch. Explore with your smartphone, capture various creatures, study them, and create your very own collection book.

Enjoy leisurely time to explore and have lunch on your own.

Our last stop before heading to the airport, last-minute shopping at the recently opened LaLaport Fukuoka, a shopping mall and more. Beside shops, take time to visit the life-sized Mobile Suit Gundam standing installation. At 20-meters tall, the

model maintains the form of the original v Gundam but has been decorated in different tricolor rather than the classic black, white, and yellow.

From here, off to the Fukuoka Airport for our flight home. After check-in, enjoy some duty-free shopping.

Hawaiian Airlines #828 Departs Fukuoka 8:40 pm – Arrive Honolulu 9:25 pm