



*in Tokyo 2023*

*Celebrate New Year's Day*

*in Tokyo & Hawaii*

*December 26th, 2022-January 1st, 2023*

*Non-stop via* **HAWAIIAN** AIRLINES. 

*5nts/7days from: \$3495 triple; \$3695 double and \$4295 single*

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

*Maximum Tour size is 24 tour members!*

*Traveling to Japan during New Year's is a great opportunity to capture a rare glimpse into the modernization of traditional Japanese culture. It is a time when most Japanese people return home to partake in traditional ceremonies and festivities. On this very special New Years' Omiyage Tour, experience and be part of that tradition.*

*If shopping is on your list, we have it covered, Tsukiji Market, Ameyoko, Asakusa, the largest Daiso in Tokyo, Harajuku, Takashita-dori, and Komachi-dori in Kamakura. On New Year's Day, a visit to Aeon Mall Narita, to celebrate "hatsuuri", the first sale of the year.*

*Accommodations for our 5-night stay, Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu, in the heart of Shibuya and directly connected to the Shibuya Station. Shibuya is one of Tokyo's most colorful and busy districts, packed with shopping, dining and nightclubs serving many thousands of visitors that pass through this district every day.*

*What are the holidays without holiday lights? We have included visits to the Tokyo Dome City Winter Illumination and Shibuya Blue Grotto Illumination.*

*Still, much more, a day trip to Kamakura, Meiji Shrine as they prepare for New Years' Day, Tokyo Tower, and a traditional multi-course New Year's Eve Japanese dinner. Steps from your hotel, enjoy the countdown festivities in Shibuya.*

*New Years' Day, hatsumode, the tradition of visiting a shrine or temple for the first prayer of the year. We will be visiting Naritasan Shinshoji, a Buddhist temple, one of the largest in Japan. Here you can also enjoy the festive atmosphere, many foods stands and opportunity to purchase lucky charms for good luck in the new year.*

*After celebrating "hatsuuri", the first sale of the year at Aeon Mall Narita, off to the airport for our flight home where it is New Year's Day all over again. Celebrate once, Hawaiian style with friends and family.*

#### **Itinerary/Details**

**Day 1 – December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022- Monday – Departure from Honolulu**

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

**Hawaiian Airlines #821 Departs Honolulu 11:20 am – Arrives Narita 4:00 pm + 1**

**Day 2 – December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022 -Tuesday – Narita-Tokyo**

After clearing customs, our local English-speaking guide will meet us for the drive to our hotel, Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu, for our 5-night stay. This 4-star hotel is directly connected to Shibuya Station, a vibrant and energetic location. Next to one of the world's most iconic sights, Shibuya Crossing, it is truly in the center of Tokyo's best shopping and nightlife.



**Accommodations: Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu** **Free**

**Day 3 – December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 -Wednesday – Tokyo-Kamakura-Tokyo (B)**

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we journey off to Kamakura. The drive time is a little over one-hour.

Kamakura became the political center of Japan when Minamoto Yoritomo chose the city as the seat for his new military government in 1192. The Kamakura government continued to rule Japan for over a century. It remained the center of Eastern Japan for some time before losing its position to other cities.

Today, Kamakura is a very popular tourist destination. Sometimes called the Kyoto of Eastern Japan, Kamakura offers numerous temples, shrines, and other historical monuments.

Once here we will be visiting the Great Buddha of Kamakura, a bronze statue of Amida Buddha, which stands on the grounds of Kotokuin Temple. With a height of 13.35 meters, it is the second tallest bronze Buddha statue in Japan.

The statue was cast in 1252 and originally located inside a large temple hall. However, the temple buildings were destroyed multiple times by typhoons and a tidal wave in the 14th and 15th centuries. So, since 1495, the Buddha has been standing in the open air.

The Great Buddha rises serenely from its base, with gorgeously draped garments that you can hardly believe are forged from bronze. The serene expression is so evident; you feel the peace the artists intended to convey. The Great Buddha of Kotoku-in is an iconic image that represents Japanese culture. It is not just big, but beautiful.

This Great Buddha or Daibutsu as is commonly called is a National Treasure and one of the centerpieces of the city's cultural heritages. For a small donation, you are permitted enter the Buddha and see from the inside how it was cast. Take a few moments to enjoy this unique experience.



### **Great Buddha of Kamakura**

From here, also close-by is Komachi dori Shopping Street where you will have free time to walk around, shop for souvenirs and enjoy some delicious snacks and foods. This is a good spot for lunch!

One must stop here is at Kamakura's famous cookie store for a sample. These dove-shaped butter cookies make for a great Kamakura souvenir and omiyage gift.

The dove motif was inspired by the plaque above the main prayer hall at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine, where the character for "Hachi" is shaped to look like a dove.

Once back in Tokyo, a holiday illumination, Tokyo Dome City Winter Illumination, one of the city's glitziest events, an amazing 230,000 LEDs draped over various structures along with a giant Christmas tree. 2022 will be its 18th year, complete with a new theme. The theme in 2021 was "illuminations you want to take photos of".

The surrounding areas in Tokyo Dome City will be similarly well lit, including the LaQua area with a 'milky way' light tunnel that stretches for 140-meters with pink and orange kaleidoscope-like illumination, and the Meet Port Garden, which is lit with champagne gold lights.

Arrival back at our hotel will be by 6:30pm and the remainder of the evening is free.

**Accommodations: Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu**



**Wi-Fi Free**

### **Day 4 – December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 -Thursday – 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 9:30am.

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 and while the inner auction market has moved to reclaimed land on Tokyo Bay, the popular outer market will live and well. Expect it to be busy as many locals will be out gathering up items to celebrate the New Year with their families.

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 would 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'll probably love Tsukiji.



### **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.

This afternoon, a visit 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 is 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. Enjoy leisurely time to browse and shop.



### Asakusa, Sensoji Temple

We end our touring day with another illumination event, this time a visit to Shibuya Blue Grotto Illumination. With over 600,000 blue lights strung the trees lining the area, it is truly a unique display of light. Drawing millions of visitors each year, Shibuya Park Street is transformed, the creation of a cave with trees. While many of Tokyo's winter illuminations are dazzling, this one has an air of mystery. Walk along and take in its grand and palatial views.

From here, our hotel is close by, arrival by 6:45pm and the remainder of the evening is free.



**Accommodations: Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu**  **Free**

### Day 5 – December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 -Friday – Tokyo (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:15am as we are off to discover more of Tokyo.

The morning begins with a drive to Akihabara Kinshicho, a large mall next to the Kinshicho Station. It is an area where mostly locals do their shopping and home to Tokyo's largest Daiso store. Be prepared for a shopping fantasy experience! There are many other shops and food venues to explore. We will be here for 2-hours.

Now, off for a visit to Meiji Shrine, located right in the middle of one of Tokyo's most popular areas is an amazing urban oasis, Meiji Jingu. It is a shinto shrine that is dedicated to the souls of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shoken. After the Emperor's death in 1912, the Japanese Diet passed a resolution to commemorate his role in the Meiji Restoration and the construction of a shrine where his soul would be enshrined was undertaken. The area around an iris garden in Tokyo where Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken had been known to visit was chosen as the building's location. With the passing of the resolution, construction began in 1915, formally dedicated in 1920 and finished in 1926.

When you enter the grounds of the shrine, probably the first thing that will get your attention is the, "torii" (the traditional gate to a Shinto shrine) you pass under. It is enormous and majestic, completely impossible to miss. There are three torii in total between the Harajuku entrance and the main building. But once you pass under the first one, you enter the forest which blocks out the sights and sounds of the city.

While walking along the path to the shrine you will pass huge barrels of sake. These barrels are donated every year by Meiji Jingu Nationwide Sake Brewers Association to the enshrined deities at the shrine, and they make for a great photo opportunity for the visitor.

About five minutes past the sake barrels, you'll come to the entrance of the main shrine area, from where you can see the Mode Gakuen building far behind in the distance. The two buildings really contrast each other. Mode Gakuen, an icon of the modern age – and Meiji Jingu an icon of ages past, but still relevant in the modern era as it one of the main places for News Year prayers.

Hatsumode is the first shrine visit of the year to pray for good fortune and health for the year to come. Close to ten million visit Meiji Shrine each year, with three million visitors alone between New Year's Eve and the 3rd of January.

Let us enjoy a walk-through Meiji and see what preparations are in place for this evening.

Now, off to Harajuku, renowned for colorful street art and youth fashion, with quirky vintage clothing stores and cosplay shops. It is without a doubt the center of Japan's teenage cultures and fashion styles. The focal point is Takeshita-dori, and its side streets, which are lined by many trendy shops, fashion boutiques, used clothes stores, crepe stands, and fast-food outlets geared towards the fashion and trend conscious teens. It is a fun experience for all ages. Just in case you forgot a purchase at Daiso, you will get another chance here.

Back to our hotel by 4:00pm and the remainder of the afternoon and evening is free. If you want to remain in Harajuku longer, it is a quick train ride on the Yamanote line, just 5-minute.



**Accommodations: Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu**  **Free**

### **Day 6 – December 31st, 2022 -Saturday – Tokyo (B/D)**

After breakfast, a complete free day to shop, sightsee, or maybe a little of each.

As you have already noticed, Shibuya is one of the most popular areas of Tokyo. It is the go-to neighborhood for entertainment, shopping, fashion, and cuisine.

Please meet your Panda Travel escort in the lobby by 5:30pm as we have a traditional multi-course Japanese New Year's Eve dinner on tap beginning at 6:00pm at one of hotel's restaurant.

After dinner, you are steps away from all the excitement as we near the midnight hour and welcome in 2023!

### **Day 7 – January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 -Sunday – Tokyo-Narita (B)**

#### ***Shinnen Akemashite Omedetou Goziamasu!***

After breakfast at our hotel, please meet your guide by 8:30am as we are off on a very special New Year's Day in Japan.

The day begins with a visit to Tokyo Tower. Standing 333 meters high in the center of Tokyo, Tokyo Tower is the world's tallest, self-supported steel tower and 13 meters taller than its model, the Eiffel Tower. A symbol of Japan's post-war rebirth as a major economic power, Tokyo Tower was the country's tallest structure from its completion in 1958 until 2012 when it was surpassed by Tokyo Skytree.

Due to its central location, the observatory offers an interesting view of the city despite being only at a relatively moderate height. There are also some "look down windows" in the floor to stand on, a souvenir shop and a cafe where you can enjoy refreshments.

Enjoy free time to take in Tokyo's landscape and stop by their gift shop.

From here, a visit to Naritasan Shinshoji, with a history of 1080 years, for the traditional celebration of hatsumode, the practice of making a "first visit" to a temple or shrine. This important tradition is to appreciate last year's health and happiness and to pray for another good year.

The most popular souvenir on this day is Omamori, prayers or sacred inscriptions inside small, colorful brocade pouches. These can be purchased at the temple, but do not look inside as tradition has it that it will bring bad luck.

Along the approach to Naritasan, a must visit is a walk along the approach, lined with many shops, food stalls, and restaurants. A popular dish here is grilled freshwater eel.

Now, off for some serious New Year's Day shopping. Shopping on New Year's Day has become popular in Japan with many sales and bargains to be had. Be ready for a crowded event once we arrive here but makes it more fun!

Close by to the Narita Airport, the ever-popular Aeon Mall. Enjoy free time in search of holiday bargains before we make our way to the airport.

**Hawaiian Airlines #822 Departs Narita 7:55 pm – Arrives in Honolulu 7:45 am**

**Don't forget that its New Year's Day here in Hawaii! Enjoy the day with friends & family!**