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# 2023 TAKAYAMA SPRING FESTIVAL

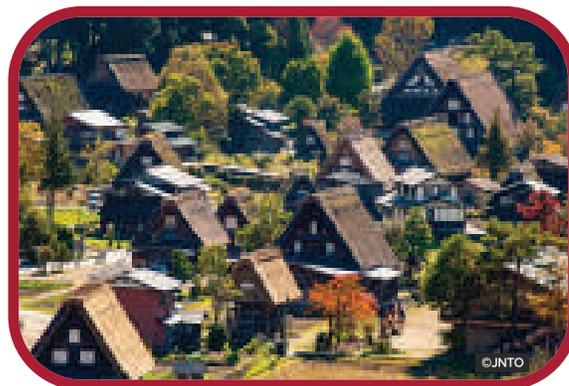
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April 10 - 19, 2023  
8 Nights/ 10 Days

Osaka - Kyoto - Takayama -  
Shirakawago - Kanazawa - Tokyo

**\$100 OFF PER PERSON**  
when you pay with a personal check



**\$4813\***

per person-triple occupancy

**\$4886\***

per person-double occupancy

**\$5341\***

per single occupancy

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Cancel for any  
reason up to  
60 days prior to  
departure date for a  
**FULL REFUND!**

A minimum of 16 participants is required for the tour to operate

# Itinerary

## Day 1: (Mon) Apr 10 – Honolulu Depart Honolulu 1:45pm via Hawaiian Airlines #449

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

## Day 2: (Tue) Apr 11 – Kansai-Osaka

Hotel Monterey Grasmere Osaka (Free WiFi)

Arrive Kansai at 6:45pm. After clearing customs, our English-speaking local guide will greet us at the arrival lobby. We'll then transfer to our hotel.

## Day 3: (Wed) Apr 12 – Osaka-Kyoto (B)

Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo (Free WiFi)

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby by 8:30am. Your luggage will be delivered to our Kyoto hotel on the same day.

Our morning begins at **Osaka Castle**, an important landmark in Osaka. Built as a display of power by Toyotomi Hideyoshi after he achieved his goal of unifying Japan, this castle has endured centuries of conflict, serving as the battleground for samurai sword fights on several occasions. There's a fascinating on-site museum here that chronicles this turbulent history.

Osaka castle is also a very popular **cherry blossom viewing site**. Though the sakura typically blooms until late March, we may still be able to catch a glimpse of these flowers upon arrival.



Day 3 - Dotonbori

Our next visit is the **Dotonbori district**, the city's most famous entertainment area offering endless dining and shopping. With our 2 hrs here, enjoy time to shop and have lunch on your own.

We're now off to Kyoto's stunning **Kiyomizu Temple**. This **UNESCO World Heritage Site** was founded over 1,200 years ago. The temple's veranda extends out to the side of a mountain with 43-foot-high wooden columns supporting its overhanging structure. It also houses a priceless statue of Kannon Bodhisattva, the goddess of mercy.

Several other buildings designated as "national treasures" dot the grounds, as do waterfalls and landmarks which have entered popular lore. According to legend, the water carries therapeutic properties and a sip from the 3 different

streams confers health, longevity, and academic success. For this reason, people have flocked to the temple to fill their tin cups with water from the falls.

Wishing for love instead? We'll also see the **Jishu-jinja Shrine**. Here, people pray to find success in love and secure their wish by walking between 2 prominent stones with their eyes closed. If they're able to complete this challenge alone, it's a sign that love is right around the corner.

Next, we'll go down from Kiyomizu Temple to **Sannen-zaka** and **Ninen-zaka**, a pair of ancient cobblestone paths surrounded by architecture from old Japan. Take a stroll along these lanes to sip some tea at Kasagiya, an authentic and well known teashop, or play with trinkets, dolls, and Japanese fans at one of the various souvenir shops selling original handcrafted Kyoto specialty goods. Enjoy some free time to explore and grab some lunch on your own.

We plan to arrive at the hotel by 5:30pm. Our hotel is located right across the street from the JR Kyoto Station and just around the corner from AEON Mall.

## Day 4: (Thu) Apr 13 – Kyoto (B)

Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo (Free WiFi)

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby at 8:30am.



Day 4 - Kinkakuji Temple

We begin our day with a visit to Kyoto's eye-catching **Kinkakuji Temple** (Golden Pavilion), a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** originally built in 1397 as Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's retirement villa but later converted into a temple. In addition to the gold-leaf on Japanese lacquer that wraps around the 2nd and 3rd floors, a Buddhist era inspired beautiful garden and "Mirror Pond" encircling the Temple reflects the delicate balance between tranquility and the Temple's grandiose facade. The Golden Pavilion is a must visit during this **cherry blossom viewing season**.

Our next stop will be to **Nijo Castle**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo Period. Noted for its wide moat, massive stone walls and elaborate defense systems, the grounds are also home to groves of **plum and cherry trees**, which typically glow pink during springtime. Our tour will take us past masterpieces of Japanese art as well as the palace's "nightingale floors," which were designed to chirp when stepped on to alert guards of intruders.

Next, we'll head to the **Kyoto Festival of the Ages Building, Toni Toni**, to shop and sample local treats. The complex's

rich interior simulates Kyoto's famous annual Festival of the Ages celebration, and is full of shops selling delicacies like Kyoto's tsukemono pickles, yatsushahi treats, and green tea confections. Enjoy lunch on your own from one of the many restaurants in the area and don't forget to pick up some snacks for home on your way out!

Next, we'll visit the dramatic **Heian-jingu Shrine**. Crafted for Kyoto's 1,100th anniversary in 1895, the shrine is relatively new and has distinct Chinese influences in its architecture. Heian-jingu is also noted for its colorful exteriors and enormous vermilion-colored torii gate, which looms at nearly 65 feet high. As we tour the grounds, you can make wishes at the shrine, buy amulets or fortunes, and observe worshippers practicing their religious rituals.

We'll tour the ground's **inner garden**, which is divided into 3 distinct parts: the East (Byakko), the Middle (Soryu) and the West (Seiho) gardens. Lush and sweeping, the gardens are typically studded with **cherry blossoms** during springtime.

After we return to the hotel by 4pm, explore the area at your leisure.

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### Day 5: (Fri) Apr 14 – Kyoto-Takayama/Takayama Festival (B/L/D)

Hotel Associa Takayama Resort

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby by 9:00am. **Please prepare a small overnight bag** as our luggage will be sent separately to Kanazawa and arrive the next day.

The morning begins with a **bullet train** ride, departing from Kyoto JR Station to Nagoya Station. From here, we'll transfer to the Limited Express Train to Takayama Station, with a 1:11pm arrival time. A **bento box lunch** will be available to enjoy on the train ride.

Today, we will set off to the Hie Shrine and enjoy an afternoon of festivities at the **Takayama Spring Festival!**

Since the 15th century, this festival has become established as one of the most beautiful and colorful in all of Japan. Along with Shishimai lion dancers, the festival's procession features hundreds of volunteers dressed in traditional Japanese attire guarding a portable shrine transporting Sannou-sama, the patron deity of Hie Shrine.

The centerpiece of the festivities are 12 remarkable antique yatai floats, which are noted for their precise ornamentation and grandeur. Displayed only during the Takayama Festival, the yatai floats are also used for twice-a-day puppet shows during the festival.

We'll return to our hotel by 3:45pm to check-in. After our **Japanese style dinner** at the hotel, we'll meet up to experience the **Takayama Night Festival**, a highlight for many. Celebrate along with the symphony of cheering and drumming as it leads the procession of vibrant yatai floats through the streets.

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### Day 6: (Sat) Apr 15 – Takayama-Shirakawago-Kanazawa (B/L)

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kanazawa (Free WiFi)

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby by 8:15am.

We begin our day with a visit to **Miyagawa Open Air Market**, one of Japan's biggest morning markets with approximately 60 stalls. Situated along the Miyagawa river with roots in the Edo period, this animated marketplace aims to support

agricultural communities by exclusively selling products from local farmers. From organic dried popcorn and pepper holders made of Hida wood to Takayama honey, dried Kabu (red turnip) chips, and fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, you'll find local farmers proudly displaying their produce. Enjoy this wonderful cultural meeting place for locals and visitors alike!

Next, we'll stop at **Shirakawa-go Village**, a Japanese mountain settlement that operated in isolation for many years and is presently a **UNESCO World Heritage site**. The village is noted for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which date back over 2 centuries, and whose steep thatched roofs resemble the hands of Buddhist monks pressed together in prayer. The roofs are brilliantly structured to protect from heavy snowfall, a design that developed over the course of many generations.

While in the village, we'll visit the **Kanda-ke house**, a beautifully maintained 160-year-old building once used in the sericulture and brewing industries. Visitors can marvel at the ingenious ghasso-style roof and dark wood interiors while sipping on wild grass tea, which is boiled on the hearth in an iron kettle.

We'll then be having a **Japanese style lunch** at a local restaurant nearby.

Next, we'll stop at **Shiroyama Park**. At a 351 foot elevation, this mountain once served as a castle fortification. This area holds special historical significance as the battleground for the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877 and is said to have been where local hero, Saigo Takamori, made his last stand at the park's Saigo Cave. Also famous is the **Shiroyama Observatory**, which offers spectacular views over downtown Kagoshima, Kagoshima Bay, and Sakurajima.



Day 6 - Kenroku-en Garden

From there, we'll drive to **Kanazawa**, the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture, and visit the **Kenroku-en Garden**, considered one of Japan's most beautiful gardens. Constructed by the ruling Maeda family over several hundred years outside Kanazawa Castle, Kenroku-en translates to "Garden of the Six Sublimities," referring to the six qualities in Chinese landscape theory that make a perfect garden.

The sprawling grounds are home to **plum and cherry trees**, whose blossoms typically bloom throughout spring. A stone lantern designed in the image of the Japanese koto has become a symbol of this garden. When the **cherry blossoms are in bloom**, the garden's walkways are particularly stunning.

We'll check in at our hotel by 5pm, with the remainder of

the evening at leisure. Our hotel is within walking distance to Kanazawa station and has a variety of dining and shopping options.

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### Day 7: (Sun) Apr 16 – Kanazawa (B)

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kanazawa (Free WiFi)

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby by 9:15am.



Day 7 - gold leaf foil

The morning will begin at **Sakuda Gold and Silver Leaf Shop**, a specialty shop that sells gold leaf decorated traditional crafts. Gold leaf production dates back 400 years in Kanazawa, and we'll learn more as we participate in a fun, **hands-on experience - gold pasting workshop**. We'll also have the chance to peruse gorgeous gift items to bring back home, including delicate gift boxes and plates.

Next, we'll head to **Higashichaya Old Town**, one of the most picturesque parts of Kanazawa. The district feels untouched by time; rows of teahouses line the streets and date back hundreds of years when geishas and samurai once populated the district's Edo-era teahouses. While it's no longer possible to pass a samurai on the street, Kanazawa is one of the few places in Japan where geishas still work. Visitors can tour through Shima teahouse, which dates back nearly 200 years and has been converted into a museum exhibiting the work and living quarters of 19th century geishas. Craft shops in the area are wonderful to stop at to look for gifts for friends and family back home.

For lunch we'll head to **Omicho Market**, Kanazawa's largest fresh food market composed of a busy network of covered streets lined with roughly 200 stalls. While most shops specialize in fresh local seafood and produce, you can also find flowers, clothing, kitchen tools, and more.

Kanazawa is also known for its sweet rice. It should come as no surprise, then, that the town has several very well-established sake breweries. At 100-year-old shop, Sake no Ohzawa Jizake Ichiba, you can find a range of local sake as well as local craft beers, and many of the restaurants specializing in rice bowls topped with Kanazawa fresh seafood.

This afternoon, we'll visit the historic **Nomura Family House** and the **Nagamachi Samurai District**.

The house belonged to the Nomuras, a wealthy samurai family that served the ruling Maeda family from the 16th century until the end of the Edo period in the mid-19th century. The house fell into disarray until a wealthy

businessman restored the home in the early 20th century. Inside, you'll tour artifacts from the past, including a suit of armor, and can enjoy a cup of matcha in the upstairs tea room while overlooking the lush green garden—the garden has been listed as one of the top gardens in Japan by the Journal of Japanese Gardening!

Enjoy a stroll through **Nagamachi Samurai District**, a beautifully preserved historic area with canals and winding lanes that was once the residential district for Kanazawa's samurai. Some of the former samurai houses and their gardens are also open for public viewing. Be sure to dip into some of the small museums and shops as you explore.

We'll return to our hotel by 4:00pm. The remainder of the evening is yours to enjoy.

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### Day 8: (Mon) Apr 17 – Kanazawa-Tokyo (B)

Sunshine City Prince Hotel WiFi)

After breakfast, please meet in the lobby by 9:15am. We'll walk to Kanazawa station to board a **bullet train** to Ueno station, Tokyo. Your luggage will be delivered to your hotel on the same day.

Once we arrive at Ueno, we're off to **Ameyoko Shopping Street**, the absolutely perfect place to get your omiyage. "Ameyoko" is short for "Ameya Yokochō" or "candy shop back alley" since candies were traditionally sold there. Alternatively, it is short for "America," a callback to the post WWII era when American products were sold there illegally.

Now, the street is lined with over 400 shops from cooked street food, snacks like dried squid, and fresh seafood to clothes, bags, accessories, cosmetics, and much more! Enjoy 2 hrs here to explore and have lunch on your own.

Our next stop is **Asakusa** – a famous district that melds the culture and traditions of ancient Tokyo with the metropolitan styles of modern Japan. It's also home to Japan's first cinema!

Widely regarded as the most important temple in Japan, Asakusa's iconic **Sensoji Temple** and **Kaminarimon Gate** (aka "Thunder Gate") with its massive lantern, are a "must see" in every guidebook, boasting over 30 million annual visitors.

Traditionally, once you reach the top of the temple steps, clap twice and bow your head as a **sign of respect**. With the belief that coins trap the dangers of daily life, visitors also customarily make a small offering by tossing coins into a wooden rack, tossing away those dangers as well.

You'll also find the **Five Storied Pagoda** there. Regarded as one of the "Four Edo Pagodas," this nearly 174 foot monument stands to represent Tokyo's few remaining pagodas.

As you roam through the temple grounds, you'll come across the **Nakamise Shopping Arcade**, a lively and extensive shopping street lined with good luck charms, traditional goodies, and Japanese snacks.

We'll arrive at the hotel by 5:30pm and the remainder of the evening is yours to explore. Your local guide is available to assist you with any questions you might have.

### Day 9: (Tue) Apr 18 Tokyo – Full day at leisure (B)

Sunshine City Prince Hotel WiFi)

After breakfast, enjoy your free day!

Our hotel lobby directly connects you to **Sunshine City**, a huge shopping and entertainment complex with four towers that include an aquarium, planetarium, solarium, a virtual reality play experience, and a 240-meter-high skyscraper with an observation deck-no wonder it's been called a "city within a city!"

Alternatively, **Ikebukuro station** is close by and has rail lines connecting you to other popular areas like **Shinagawa, Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ueno, and Akihabara**.

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### Day 10: (Wed) Apr 19 – Tokyo-Haneda-Honolulu (B)

After breakfast, please meet in the hotel lobby by 9:30am. While it's our last day on tour, there's still much to see and do before our flight home later this evening!

This morning, we'll start our day at **Tokyo Tower**, the world's tallest self-supported steel tower at nearly 1,100 feet high (it just ekes out ahead of its model, Paris's Eiffel Tower). Because of its central location, the tower offers

a compelling city view. In addition to several shops and restaurants, there's also a sports center, where visitors can play interactive games and participate in e-sport activities.

We'll also make a stop at **TEAMLab Borderless Tokyo Toyosu**, an immersive museum that uses technology and perspective to put viewers at a fascinating proximity to digital art. Visitors pass through labyrinth-like rooms where they experience fields of flowers, or look up at walls that appear to be composed of brightly lit geographic shapes.

Enjoy lunch on your own & spend some free time picking up last minute shopping items at **Diversity Shopping Center**. Don't forget to get a photo in front of the life-sized Unicorn Gundam Statue, towering at 78 feet.

We'll now head out to Haneda Airport and begin the check-in process for our flight home.

**Depart Haneda 8:15pm via Hawaiian Airlines #864.**

**Arrive in Honolulu at 8:35am.**

Thank you for traveling with us!



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#### Please note the following:

- **\*Fares and fees** (priced in USD) are subject to change in light of fuel supplements, taxes, and fees. Tour members are responsible for any differences in costs. Additionally, we reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary with or without notice.
- **Travel insurance:** We highly recommend the purchase of trip insurance. Please ask our representatives for more information.
- **Special Assistance:** You must inform us of any disability/impairment that requires special attention at the time of your making the reservation. We reserve the right to cancel the reservation(s) if the disability/impairment is unsuitable for the tour. You are also responsible for any costs and/or accommodations related to your disability/impairment, such as providing your own travel companion.
- All U.S. citizens must hold a valid passport at the time of travel, which includes a passport that will not expire at least within 6 months from the return tour date. Non-U.S. passport holders must check with the Japanese Consulate to see if a visa is required.
- You are expected to abide by domestic and international government and accommodation policies related to health, safety, and welfare.
- Land Tour Operator is Nippon Travel Agency.
- Land Tour costs are based on current currency conversion rates, which are subject to change. We will notify tour members of any substantial changes to the costs.
- Not Included in the tour: Gratuities for local English speaking guide; additional baggage fee charges from the airlines; alcohol and soft drinks with meals.
- A **minimum of 16 participants** are required for the tour to operate.

#### Booking requirements/Payment policy/Cancellation policy:

- **Reserve with \$75 per person deposit. Refundable up to 60 days prior to departure, February 9, 2023.**
- **Final payment due by February 21, 2023. Package is non-refundable after this date.**