

Join Panda Travel in...



# 2024 Discover Japan in Spring

(GPI3099)



March 15 - 22, 2024  
6 Nights/ 8 Days

*Fukuoka - Shimonoseki - Iwakuni  
- Miyajimaguchi - Hiroshima -  
Kurashiki - Himeji - Kobe - Osaka*

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

**\$3,789\***

per person-triple occupancy

**\$3,789\***

per person-double occupancy

**\$3,988\***

single occupancy

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(808) 734-1961

1017 Kapahulu Ave, Honolulu, HI 96816

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

## Discover Japan



### Day 1: (Fri) Mar 15 – Honolulu Depart Honolulu via Hawaiian Airlines 827

Please meet the Panda Travel representative 3 hours prior to departure at the Hawaiian Airlines check-in counters.

### Day 2: (Sat) Mar 16 – Fukuoka-Hakata

Hotel Clio Court Hakata (Free WiFi)

→ Arrive at Fukuoka Airport.

→ Meet your guide at the arrival lobby. Transfer to **Hotel Clio Court Hakata** — Our hotel is centrally located and adjacent to the JR Hakata Station which offers over 100s of stores, including major department stores like Hankyu and Tokyu Hands. Nearby, you can also find Kitte shopping mall (directly linked to the Hakata Station) and a large Daiso. There are also many restaurant options close by. We'll be staying here for the next 2 nights.

### Day 3: (Sun) Mar 17 – Hakata (B)

Hotel Clio Court Hakata (Free WiFi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 9:00am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby.

→ 9:30am – The morning begins with a visit to **Kushida Shrine**, which is believed to have been established in 757, making it one of Fukuoka's oldest shrines. While not extensive, there are a few notable things to look out for,

including a towering ginkgo tree rumored to be over 1,000 years old, and some intriguing Tengu masks.

→ 10:15am – 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 is well worth the visit. See a sample of traditional architecture and an exhibition hall with all beautiful artifacts that help illuminate the history of this fascinating city.

→ 11:30am – If you're looking for a unique souvenir from Fukuoka, look no further than one of the most beautiful representations of Japanese culture: Hakata Dolls. Known for their soft colors and intricately carved expressions, these unglazed clay dolls are masterfully crafted from 500 year old traditional techniques. Here, we'll test our skills on this **hands-on doll-coloring experience** at the **Hakata Doll Hall Shogetsudo**.

→ 12:45pm – With a history spanning over 130 years, **Kawabata Shopping Arcade** was the first merchant area in Hakata district which now hosts over 130 stores, ranging from traditional to modern, offering a vibrant array of apparel shops, restaurants, and specialty stores. Explore this area and enjoy lunch on your own.

→ 3:00pm – **Return to hotel** – Enjoy the remainder of the day shopping and dining on your own.

### Day 4: (Mon) Mar 18 – Hakata-Shimonoseki-Iwakuni-Miyajimaguchi (B/D)

Aki Grand Hotel (Free WiFi)

→ Breakfast at hotel.

→ 8:30am – Meet your guide at the hotel lobby. This morning, we'll drive to Main island via Kanmon Bridge, a key attraction in Shimonoseki, spanning 1068 meters with six car lanes, connecting Honshu and Kyushu across the strait.

→ 10:00am – Perched on a hill overlooking the sea in Kitakyushu City, the **Shirano Botanical Garden** showcases kanzakura (**winter cherry blossoms**), which bloom as early as February. Home to around 800 cherry trees in 60 varieties, the garden also features a tapestry of azaleas, peonies, all set against the backdrop of a wetland and aquatic garden. Amidst this natural splendor stands the Shirano Japanese cherry tree, a beloved symbol of the prefecture's heritage and a designated natural monument.

→ 11:30am – Next, a stop at **Karato Market**. Enjoy this "local kitchen," a bustling marketplace of fresh seafood and other regional delights!

→ 1:00pm – Moving onto our next adventure, we'll ride the **Hinoyama Ropeway**, which will take us to the observation deck atop Mount Hinoyama. Here, you'll find panoramic views of Shimonoseki and Moji across the strait as well as the neighboring mountain ranges.

→ This afternoon, we'll drive to Iwakuni including a rest stop.

→ **4:30pm** – Here we're at **Kintai-kyo Bridge**, ranked as one of Japan's three great bridges, a 2 star awardee of the Michelin Green Guide to Japan and the pride of Iwakuni City. With origins dating back to 1673, the bridge's dramatic and recognizable five arches were designed to slow the attack of invading armies as they struggled to sustain their energy after crossing each arch to reach Iwakuni Castle. This historic structure, originally crafted without nails, is supported by six types of interwoven joined wood, standing as a testament to Japanese architectural ingenuity and craftsmanship.

→ **6:00pm** – **Arrive at Aki Grand Hotel, followed by a Japanese style dinner at 6:30pm.** Our hotel is located on a shoreline opposite a World Heritage Site, Miyajima Island. During your stay, enjoy the hotel's sauna, swimming pool, indoor bath, or open air outdoor bath with stunning waterfront views.

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### **Day 5: (Tue) Mar 19 – Miyajimaguchi-Hiroshima (B)**

Hotel Granvia Hiroshima (Free WiFi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **9:00am** – **Meet your guide at hotel lobby.**

→ **9:25am** – From here, off to **Miyajima Island**. We'll take 10 min. **ferry ride** to Miyajima Island, also known as the "Island of Gods," and one of the most gorgeous destinations in Japan. You might recognize it from its oft-photographed vermilion Torii Gate (shrine gate) of Itsukushima-jinja, which seems to float on the waves at high tide.

→ **10:00am** – After the Miyajima Ferry ride, we'll walk along Omote-Sando, the main street that leads to **Itsukushima Shrine**, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Japan's most unique shrines. The shrine is dedicated to the god that protects from sea disasters and wars. Most noteworthy are its Torii Gate and the Shaden (shrine pavilion), which are both submerged under the sea at full tide. At low tide, the water recedes completely and it's possible to walk out to the gate.

→ **11:00am** – **Omotesando Shopping street at Miyajima** – Enjoy lunch on your own, shop along the way for souvenirs like Shamoji (a rice scoop), and sample Hiroshima delicacies like Momiji manju (buns shaped like maple leaves and filled with a bean-jam filling).

→ **12:55pm** – **Leave Miyajima Island via ferry ride.**

→ **1:45pm** – **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum/ Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park/A-Bomb Dome** – After WWII, Japanese architect Kenzo Tange spearheaded the design of this park to commemorate the lives lost on August 6, 1945. The A-Bomb Dome, the only remaining structure

in the area from the first atomic bomb, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.

→ **4:00pm** – **Arrive at Hotel Granvia Hiroshima.** Enjoy shopping and dining on your own this evening.

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### **Day 6: (Wed) Mar 20 – Hiroshima-Kurashiki-Himeji (B)**

Hotel Nikko Himeji (Free WiFi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **8:30am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby.**

→ **10:45am** – Once here, we'll visit **Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter**, a beautifully preserved historical area converted from the former city's rice storehouses with modern eateries, souvenir shops, and museums woven in. Immaculately preserved from the Edo period, this old rice-merchant quarter consists of around 300 old houses and granaries, with the oldest being 300 years old. Some families who have lived here for generations are still there! Today's old Kurashiki consists of dozens of characteristic whitewashed, black-tiled kura (rice granaries) centered around a willow-lined transport canal, making for a beautiful picturesque scene. It is a "must see traditional neighborhood" that blends the past with the present. Have lunch on your own and do some small kine shopping.

→ **2:15pm** – **Himeji Castle and Koko-en Gardens**, one of the last surviving feudal castles, also known as "White Heron Castle" for its unique white exterior and resemblance to a bird taking flight. Himeji boasts 83 buildings and is adjacent to a beautiful preserved Japanese garden, Koko-en, built in the architectural style of the Edo period (1603-1867). A stroll through the nine different gardens within Koko-en will reveal the Garden of Bamboo, the Tea Ceremony Garden, the Garden of Pine Trees, and other gardens designed to highlight Japan's four seasons. It's no wonder Himeji Castle is widely regarded as Japan's national treasure and a UNESCO world heritage site!

→ **4:15pm** – Arrive at **Hotel Nikko Himeji** – After check-in, the remainder of the evening is free. Perhaps a visit to Piolo Himeji, the biggest shopping mall in Himeji, located a few blocks away from our hotel.

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### **Day 7: (Thu) Mar 21 – Himeji-Kobe-Osaka (B/L)**

Hotel Nikko Osaka (Free WiFi)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **9:00am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby.**

→ **10:00am** – This morning, a visit to this lively 400 year old local fish market and shopping street, **Akashi Seafood Market**. Sample the freshest catches from the famous fishing port of Akashi and keep your eye out for the local specialty: octopus!

→ **12:00pm** – We'll then head to **lunch** at a local restaurant and try one of Kobe's most significant culinary exports—**kobe beef**—a special grade of beef from Wagyu cattle raised in Kobe, Japan. These cattle are massaged with sake and are fed a daily diet that includes large amounts of beer. This produces meat that is extraordinarily tender, finely marbled, and full-flavored.

→ **1:30pm** – Now, explore **Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum** on the outskirts of Kobe. There, we'll learn more about Japan's national beverage and discover how sake is manufactured from grains of rice into its final sweet, fermented form. This brewery is inside an old sake kura and unlike a modern museum, the interior's unique smell and look will transport you to a brewery from the old-world, reflective of the building itself. As we wander through the various stages of sake-making, you'll have the opportunity to sip on freshly pressed sake.

→ **3:15pm** – Arrive at **Hotel Nikko Osaka**. Welcome to Osaka, Japan's third-largest city and the capital of commerce with a bustling street life in its arcades, markets, and byways. Osaka's citizens speak the Kansai dialect and are known for their outgoing nature, as well as for their abiding love of delicious street food. Our hotel is located a short walk from **Dotonbori** and **Shinsaibashi shopping streets**. Enjoy the remainder of the day to explore the wonderful city of Osaka for shopping and dining on your own.

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## Day 8: (Fri) Mar 22 – Osaka-Kansai Airport-Honolulu (B)

→ **Breakfast at hotel.**

→ **9:00am** – **Meet your guide at the hotel lobby for a full day tour in the Osaka area.**

→ **9:30am** – Our morning begins at one of Osaka's most culturally significant destinations: **Osaka Castle**. After unifying Japan in the 16th century, military leader Toyotomi Hideyoshi proudly built the castle as a display of power. The castle has endured centuries of conflict (including as a battleground for samurai sword fights) and has subsequently gone through several reconstructions. As you walk through the grounds, take note of the castle's massive stone walls, striking gold-leaf trim, copper roof, and panoramic views. During this season, the park's 4,000 cherry trees typically bloom into one of the largest congregations of cherry blossoms in Japan— adding even more drama to one of the city's most photogenic destinations.

→ **11:30am** – Now visit the bustling **Kuromon Ichiba Market!** Also known as the "Kitchen of Osaka," this famous 190 year old market is a popular spot for locals, and an especially go-to destination for many of the city's chefs to gather their supplies. With over 150 vendors, the market offers a wide variety of fresh and local produce, seafood, meats, sweets, and other traditional Japanese foods. Enjoy

lunch on your own.

→ **1:30pm** – Adorned with lanterns and glowing neon lights, the iconic **Shinsekai ("New World") District** is a gateway into Osaka's early 20th Century past. Seemingly frozen in time, this retro playground of amusement arcades, shops, and eateries is a nostalgic experience you won't forget!

→ **4:00pm** – Here we're at **AEON Mall Rinku Sennan**, a large shopping mall with everything you need to round up any last minute shopping. You can even find snacks and freshly made bentos to take along to the airport.

→ **Arrive at Kansai International Airport.**

→ **Depart from Kansai International Airport via HA450 for Honolulu.**

→ **Arrive in Honolulu (same day).**

Thank you for traveling with us! 

# Need to Know...



## Payment Policy

- » Reserve with \$75 per person deposit. Refundable up to 60 days prior to departure date, January 15, 2024.
- » Final payment due by January 27, 2024. Package is non-refundable after this date.

## \* Fares and Fees (Priced in USD)

- » Are subject to change in light of fuel supplements, taxes, and differences in costs.
- » Air ticket fare is guaranteed, but taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges are subject to change until tickets are issued, approximately 45 days out.
- » We reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary with or without notice.



## 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.



## Travel Insurance

- » We highly recommend the purchase of trip insurance. Please ask our representatives for more information.



## Travel Documents

- » A valid passport is required for all U.S. citizens and must be valid and not expire at least 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.



## Land Tour Operator & Costs

- » Land Tour Operator is Nippon Travel Agency.
- » Land Tour costs are based on current currency conversion rates, which are subject to change.



## Other remarks

- » 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.
- » You are expected to abide by domestic and international government and accommodation policies related to health, safety, and welfare.