



# CRIMSON LEAF TOUR

## Details

Duration: 11 nights Max Group size: 10

Starts in: Tokyo Ends in: Tokyo

## Prices

Start Date	Finish Dates	Price	Spaces available	Reference	Hotel Level
11 Nov 2018	22 Nov 2018	£3,100.00	6	1118CL	High
10 Nov 2019	21 Nov 2019	£3,100.00	10	1119CL	High

## Overview

The Crimson Leaf tour is the perfect choice for an **Autumn tour of Japan**. Every year when the intense heat of the summer breaks, Japan bursts into flame with autumn colours. At autumn's peak in November, the mountains, the forests, the urban parks and avenues are ablaze with every kind of red, orange and yellow providing a stunning backdrop for your holiday.

The Crimson Leaf Tour is all about the glory of the Japanese autumn. At this time of year, the days are still warm and summery (by British standards) and the evenings are feeling the first chills, which make the many bars and restaurants cosy and welcoming. The Crimson Leaf Tour will take you **from modern Tokyo to the ancient capital of Kyoto** experiencing the best of the new and the traditional – all framed in the dramatic hues of the ubiquitous maple.

Starting with a couple of days amongst the bustle and thrills of downtown Tokyo, the Crimson Leaf Tour moves west to the national park around Hakone, home of Mt. Fuji. In the Edo era (17th to 19th centuries) the area was famous as a getaway for the Japanese upper classes, but popular today with all kinds of people. Visitors come from all over Japan and the world to take in the stunning scenery, visit the many world-class art and culture museums, and unwind in the numerous hot springs. From here, the tour continues west to Kyoto with its bounty of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** and revered Zen gardens that are seen at their finest among the autumn leaves.

Day trips are available to Hiroshima and Nara, there are lessons in tea ceremony, rides on the bullet train and fresh sake straight out of the vats. You will stay at fine hotels and traditional ryokan (inns). The Crimson Leaf Tour is a chance to experience the Japan's cultural highlights at their most picturesque. If you are planning a Japan tour during the Autumn this year or in 2019 the Crimson Leaf tour should be at the top of your shortlist.

The Crimson Leaf Tour is fully guided, all accommodation, entrance fees and city to city transportation is included. Use the tabs above to find out more about this Autumn tour in Japan including the full itinerary, the accommodation, photos, inclusions and exclusions.

## Itinerary

### Summary

Day 01 Group Meal; Walking Tour of Shinjuku and Kabukicho Entertainment District	Tokyo
Day 02 Tsukiji Fish Market; Asakusa; Sumida River Cruise; Hama-Rikyu Gardens	Tokyo
Day 03 Hakone; Open Air Museum; Natural Hot Springs; Kaiseki Gourmet Dinner	Hakone
Day 04 Views of Mt. Fuji; Pirate Ship over Lake Ashi; The Old Tokaido Highway Feudal Checkpoint; Cedar Avenue; Kaiseki Gourmet Dinner	Hakone
Day 05 Bullet Train to Kyoto; Ginkaku-ji (UNESCO Silver Pavilion) Tetsugaku-no-michi (Path of the Philosopher)	Kyoto
Day 06 UNESCO World Heritage day – Ryoanji Zen Garden; Kinkaku-ji (Golden Zen Pavilion); Nijo Castle	Kyoto
Day 07 Arashiyama; Bamboo Grove; Tenryuji Zen Garden (UNESCO); Saga-Toriimoto Preserved area	Kyoto
Day 08 Free Day; Shop, Relax, Take a daytrip to Hiroshima or Nara; or Join a Workshop!	Kyoto
Day 09 Eastern Mountains of Kyoto; Tea Ceremony; Kiyomizudera (UNESCO); Gion Geisha District; (optional) Cultural Show	Kyoto
Day 10 Bullet train to Tokyo; Sake brewery	Tokyo
Day 11 Kiyosumi Gardens; Rikugien Garden	Tokyo
Day 12 End of Tour	End of Tour

\* Ryokan- Traditional Japanese inn.

We recommend arriving in Japan a day or two before the tour starts to help with acclimatization and overcome any jet lag. We can organize any additional nights at the tour hotel and will be pleased to meet you at the airport (at either Narita or Haneda) and transfer with you to the hotel (up to one week before

the start of the tour), making your transition as smooth as possible. We'll also run through the maps with you, answering all your questions and setting you off on your first adventures, here in one of the world's greatest metropolises..

You want more? A popular after-tour excursion for the Crimson Leaf Tour is to finish up with a couple of days relaxing in hot springs in the scenic area of Kawaguchiko, on the northern side of Mt.Fuji. If this is of interest, or any other excursion, such as to Nikko (a couple of hours north of Tokyo), please just drop us a line and we'll be happy to organize your after-tour adventure!

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# Itinerary

## Details

### Day 1 - Tokyo

In the evening, the group meets up and goes to a local restaurant in Shinjuku. This is an ideal opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and provides a great introduction to Japanese cuisine.

Afterwards, you take a walking tour around **Shinjuku** and the entertainment district of **Kabukicho**; the area is buzzing with energy and neon and the streets are packed with people in search of big-city thrills.

### Day 2 - Tokyo

This morning you go to the famous **Tsukiji Fish Market**. There are hundreds of varieties of fish from around the world here and rowdy fish mongers trade tuna for hundreds of thousands of dollars each. You can try some of the choicest, freshest cuts without paying oceanic prices at one of the many sushi markets around the market.

Later, we make our way to **Asakusa**, an atmospheric part of the city and the location of the first temple in what is now called Tokyo. Asakusa is also known as the old gateway to the **Yoshiwara**, “the Floating World” red light district of the Edo era. Take time to browse the market stalls and explore the side streets where the real treasures are hidden.

After a bite for lunch, you catch a boat along the **Sumida River** towards Tokyo Bay taking in the city from an unexpected perspective as you pass under colourful bridges on your way to the **Hama-Rikyu** landscape gardens. Steeped in history, the gardens were a place the Shogun would hunt, relax and flaunt his prestige to guests from Japan’s elite.

### Day 3 - Hakone

Getting away from the city for a while, you take the “Romance Car” train from Shinjuku to **Hakone**, the national park surrounding **Mt. Fuji**. The shadow of Mt Fuji is not an obvious place to find work by world-renowned artists, but the area is blessed with some special museums.

Your tour leader will take you to the **Open Air Museum** riding the switch-back train up through the mountains, a beautiful backdrop for art featuring pieces by Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso and many Japanese artists. Alternatively we can give you directions and help you get to one of the many other fantastic museums in the area, explore the town, or soak the day away relaxing in **hot springs**. Art is not the only attraction: this is Japan and history is everywhere.

At Hakone we stay at a traditional ryokan, (**Japanese inn**) with spacious suites comprising a bedroom, a tatami mat room, and a **private bath on the balcony**. There is also a communal onsen (natural hot spring bath) both indoors and outdoors to relax in (male and female baths are separate). The gourmet dinner, which is included, and which is the centrepiece of any stay in a ryokan, is a traditional kaiseki Japanese meal of seasonal dishes. Afterwards, you might like to take in the views from the roof terrace.

### Day 4 - Hakone

This day of fun begins with a scenic trip on the switchback train up the mountain to **Gora**. A further ascent on a cable car allows superb views of **Mt. Fuji with its snow-capped peak**.

At the top here you can eat the famous black eggs cooked in the volcanic waters, each of which is said to lengthen your life by seven years. They are a popular buy.

You take another cable car down the other side of the pass offering more scenic views of Mt. Fuji to the volcanic **lake of Ashiko**. After lunch by the lake you board a pirate ship taking you across the water to the site of the sekisho, the reconstruction of the old **Tokaido checkpoint**. There were many such highway checkpoints during the feudal times, but this one is said to have been the most feared. You learn about its history and its significance before walking along a stretch of the original Tokaido highway lined by 400-year-old cedar trees - known as the **Cedar Avenue**. The trees, planted by order of the shogun, protected travellers from the icy winds and the snows of the winter, and the intense sun during the summer months.

Later, back at your room enjoy soaking on your room balcony bath looking out over the town below.

### Day 5 - Kyoto

After a 270km/h ride on the Shinkansen (**bullet train**) the tour arrives in Japan’s cultural heart: **Kyoto**. The centrally located hotel you stay at is a great base from which to explore Kyoto’s many attractions and places of interest.

Today you walk along Tetsugakku-no-michi, the **Path of Philosophy**, following a stream lined with maple trees, one of the most famous spots in Kyoto during the season of crimson leaves. The 2km walk ends at Ginkaku-ji, the **Silver Pavilion**, built in 1482 by Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, the grandson of Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu who built the Golden Pavilion (which you’ll see tomorrow).

If you have the legs, you might want to consider breaking away from the group and hiking up Daimonji, the hill behind Ginkaku-ji, which has fantastic views over the city from the summit – the exertion earns you a spectacular view of the sunset.

### Day 6 - Kyoto

Today you visit three of the most important sites in Kyoto, each of which enjoys UNESCO World Heritage status. The classic **Zen garden of Ryoanji** was laid down in the 15th century and is the ideal of Zen minimal elegance and the harmony of aesthetics and spirituality. The design of the garden allows for only 14 of the 15 rocks to be seen from any one point, and only those who have achieved enlightenment can see all 15.

It is a short journey to The **Golden Pavilion** of Kinkakuji, which casts its reflection on the small shimmering lake it sits beside – it is truly one of the most beautiful pieces of architecture in the world.

You finish the day at **Nijo Castle**, built as a show of power and prestige by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603. It is known for its elaborate decorations and nightingale flooring which “sings” as you walk on it making the presence of all, including potential assassins, known.

### Day 7 - Kyoto

Later, visit the charming district of **Arashiyama** in western Kyoto, a short train ride away. Walk through the atmospheric **bamboo grove** to one of Kyoto’s

most famous and important Zen temples, Tenryuji. With UNESCO World Heritage status, **Tenryuji** and its classic Zen garden was founded in 1339 and dedicated to the emperor Go-Daigo by Ashikaga Takauji, the first of the Ashikaga Shogun.

After lunch, continue into the less known or visited area of northern Arashiyama, a peaceful neighbourhood away from the crowds with kayabuki thatched roof houses. Spend the afternoon here before returning to Kyoto later.

## Day 8 - Kyoto

Today is a **free day**. Shop, relax and explore; there is so much to do in Kyoto and the surrounding area. Dragonfly Tours offer plenty of suggestions and let you in on a few local secrets to help you make the most of the day.

Perhaps you would prefer to attend a workshop for one of the following:

- Taiko (traditional drumming)
- Ikebana (flower arranging)
- Wearing a kimono
- Cooking class at a local home
- Shodo (Calligraphy)
- Paper craft with Washi paper

If interested, please let us know in advance and we'll get it arranged for you!

If you would like to travel a little further afield making the most of your rail pass, **Hiroshima** and **Nara** are two contrasting, history-steeped cities within easy travelling distance. Hiroshima – a city that needs no introduction – is just a bullet train ride away. The Peace Park, atomic bomb museum and dome make for a very moving experience.

Nara is much closer to Kyoto and was the original capital of Japan. The centrepiece of the city is UNESCO World Heritage Site Todaiji, the world's largest freestanding wooden building and home to the world's largest bronze statue of the Vairocana Buddha at 15 metres tall and built in 752. Todaiji stands in expansive parkland that is full of tame deer, considered to be messengers of the gods.

## Day 9 - Kyoto

For a moment of calm and tranquillity, enjoy an authentic **tea ceremony** in a teahouse nestled in the historical area of Higashiyama, the **Eastern Mountains**.

Staying in the neighbourhood, visit Kyoto's most popular temple, **Kiyomizudera**, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. The temple has perched on stilts on the side of the mountain in a sea of maple for 1,200 years – an engineering feat impressive on its own, but the temple was built here without the use of one single nail. The maple will be aflame with seasonal colours.

From Kiyomizudera you walk through the old winding cobbled streets to **Gion**, famed for its geisha. Here, in the evening after the day's sightseeing has concluded, you'll have the opportunity to attend a show of traditional performing arts including a dance by maiko (apprentice geisha), koto music, gagaku and bunraku theatre.

## Day 10 - Tokyo

Today we return to Tokyo by bullet train, after dropping by your hotel, we will visit a local **sake distillery** dating back to the 1800's where you'll be will be given a tour of the buildings and facilities learning about the craft. Afterwards you'll have the opportunity to sample some of the produce! Soft drinks and **local craft beers** are also available.

## Day 11 - Tokyo

This morning will start with a visit to **Kiyosumi Gardens**, which date to the 18th century and carry a special Place of Scenic Beauty designation from Tokyo city government. The exact origins of these gardens are obscured by time, but over the centuries they have been a playground for the rich and exalted, a refuge from the fires of the 1923 earthquake, and now a public park and island of calm in the unrelenting city.

While on the subject of green getaways, in the afternoon visit **Rikugien Gardens** built in around the year 1700 and considered by most as the best spot for koyo (autumn leaves) in Tokyo. Take your time and stroll the trails and forests around the central pond.

## Day 12 - End of Tour

This is the last day of the tour and there is no itinerary planned. Some guests head to the airport today for their homebound flight, but many stay on a few more days. Dragonfly Tours Japan is happy to help you with the arrangements for an extended stay.

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## Accommodation



A luxury skyscraper hotel in Shinjuku, the dynamic heart of Tokyo and situated beside Shinjuku station. Parks, shops, department stores, bars, and restaurants of every kind are all close at hand. The rooms have amazing views over the city.

All rooms have LAN & Wi-Fi

Breakfasts included



An excellent ryokan serving gourmet food. We have spacious Japanese suites for the Crimson Leaf Tour with private baths on the balcony. Soak in the luxury!

All rooms have Wi-Fi

Traditional breakfasts and dinners included



A new hotel in central Kyoto in the Sanjo area; close to many restaurants, shops and the Nishiki food market. Subway only 3 minutes away, an ideal location to explore and to explore from!

All rooms have LAN & Wi-Fi

Please note that the accommodation above is standard for the Crimson Leaf Tour but is at times subject to change to a similar or better hotel.  
All hotels have been selected with location and comfort in mind.

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## Other Information

### Flexibility

The itineraries in our tours are flexible, and do vary occasionally, sometimes due to weather or on-going events such as festivals which guests may want to see.

In addition if there is something else you'd like to do or see on your trip please mention this to your tour leader and we'll try our best to ensure you can do it.

### Age / Requirements / Fitness

The Crimson Leaf Tour is suitable for all ages but in general most guests on this tour are aged between 40 and 70, it's ideal for couples and friends alike.

Our only hard and fast requirements are English speaking ability (all tours are conducted in English) and a zest for life! While Olympic levels of fitness are not necessary, on average we cover around 3 to 5 kilometres per day on foot and there are at times steps involved at some stations and sites we visit.

Having said all that, walking is done at an easy pace, with plenty of stops for ice cream and to absorb the sights. In the unlikely event that an excursion is going to be too taxing or if you have another preference, you are welcome to break away from the group at any time, or take a taxi to skip some of the walking sections. No part of the itinerary is compulsory - we like to keep things as fun and flexible as possible!

### Transportation

As with all our Small Group Tours of Japan we use the extremely efficient, clean, safe and reliable public transportation network – it's the most efficient way to get around, and by far it's the best way to experience the country and its people. This is not a tour bus holiday with fixed tourist trap set lunches and carpet sales in the afternoon!

### Baggage Forwarding

We forward your main baggage ahead from hotel to hotel where necessary during the tour (one case / bag per person). You can enjoy all the pleasures of travel without having to drag your case around with you.

If you bring too much luggage with you, or buy too many souvenirs during the tour; and require additional baggage transfers we are happy to arrange this for you.

### Minimum Numbers

The minimum number of passengers on the Crimson Leaf Tour is two – we believe it's unfair to cancel tours when the numbers are not larger.

### Single Supplement

We can accept single travellers on the Crimson Leaf Tour, but unfortunately due to the accommodation used the single supplement is expensive. If this isn't too much of a concern, please let us know and we'll be able to give you the options. Also we are happy to try to arrange for you to share a room with another traveller of the same sex.

### What is Included?

- ALL accommodation (11 nights)
- The support of your Tour Leader for the entirety of the tour
- ALL city to city transportation including the shinkansen bullet train
- Meet & greet at the airport in Tokyo (either Narita or Haneda) on arrival and transfer (Guided) to the tour hotel in the city up to one week before the starting date of the tour
- Tickets for airport transfer at the end of the tour from the tour hotel (non-guided)
- ALL Entrance fees to temples, shrines & museums when with your guide following the itinerary
- 2018 tour - Most local transport (subways / city buses / cable cars / boats) is covered by the various travel passes we issue, but not all coming to an overall total of around an additional GB£10 per person
- 2019 tour - ALL local transportation will be covered while following the set guided itinerary. (Any non-guided side-excursions at personal expense)
- Suica card - An electronic travel card with JPY1,500 credit on it for your convenience (saves messing around with tickets especially while in Tokyo!)
- Sumida River Cruise in Tokyo
- First Class Tickets on Pirate Ship in Hakone
- Authentic Tea Ceremony at a tea house in Kyoto
- Baggage forwarding for one case per person
- Breakfast every morning
- Group meal on Day 1 in Tokyo (Alcoholic drinks included!)
- Dinners (Traditional Teishoku) on Days 4 and 5 at Hakone
- Tour Info-Pack
- 100% payment protection through the TTA (our membership number is U6165)

### What's not included?

- Meals, except for the ones mentioned above
- 2018 Tour - Local transportation which is not covered by the various travel passes we issue for the tour - this comes to around GB£10 in total. (On the 2019 Tour, all local transportation as well as the city to city transportation is included)
- Travel Insurance. You must take out travel insurance before travelling to Japan, we suggest that this is done soon after a booking has been made.
- Flights to and from Japan!