



NORTHERN ROUTE TOUR (TO KYOTO)

Details

Duration: 7 Nights

Max Group size: 8

Starts in: Tokyo

Ends in: Kyoto / Osaka / Tokyo

Prices

Start Date	Finish Dates	Price	Spaces available	Reference	Hotel Level
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Overview

Our Northern Routes of Japan tour from Tokyo to Kyoto is a fast paced addition to our collection of Japan tours (<https://www.dragonflytours-japan.com>). Unlike our other tours, the Northern Route Tour to Kyoto is a quick paced tour for those who want to see and experience a lot of Japan in a short period of time, this **tour of northern Japan** is a 7 night getaway which delivers much in a short space of time.

We take you off the main tourist route connecting Tokyo and Kyoto making the most of the newer bullet train route running north through the rural plains and hills of Nagano.

We see the famous Snow Monkeys, have the opportunity to soak in a wild outdoor hot spring, travel through the Kurobe Gorge, stay in a 250 year old farmhouse, eat delicious local foods and see exquisite gardens and beautiful scenery. The Tour finishes in Kyoto, the old capital steeped in history, from here you may want to return to Tokyo, go skiing if in the winter, fly out from Osaka, or why not stay in Kyoto for a few more days. We'll be happy to help with extra arrangements!

If you are looking for a fabulous trip through northern Japan, this is the tour for you.

Itinerary

Summary

Day 01	Introductions; Group Meal; Walking Night Tour of Kabuki-cho	Tokyo
Day 02	Bullet Train to Nagano; Snow Monkeys	Nagano / Yudanaka
Day 03	Kurobe Gorge; Wild Hot Spring	Kurobe (May - Nov). Matsumoto (Dec - April)
Day 04	Old Preserved Quarter; Sake Distillery; Kusakabe House	Takayama
Day 05	Thatched Village; Home Cooked Meal; Overnight Stay in Farmhouse	Shirakawa-go
Day 06	Kenroku-en Garden; Samurai House & Garden	Kanazawa
Day 07	Kyoto; Sanjusangendo; Free Time	Kyoto
Day 08	End of Tour	End of Tour

Itinerary

Details

Day 1 - Tokyo

The tour starts this evening. After introductions and a tour briefing we go for a walking tour of neon-lit night time entertainment district of Kabuki-cho where we eat at a local restaurant (on us). This is a great opportunity to experience some local cuisine and meet the other members of the group.

Day 2 - Nagano / Yudanaka

This morning we'll board the bullet train bound for Nagano arriving there in around 90 minutes. After dropping off your baggage at the hotel near the station we'll continue to the Jigokudani Monkey Park where we'll walk through the forest to see the famous Snow Monkeys bathing in the volcanic hot springs. Here you'll have plenty of free time to watch and photograph the monkey antics.

Day 3 - Kurobe (May - Nov). Matsumoto (Dec - April)

We continue our journey north on the Hokuriku bullet train bound for Kurobe Unazuki. After dropping off your baggage at the hotel we take the scenic railway through the gorge, it's best to sit on the right side, the views are amazing! We wind our way along getting off at the remote station of Kurobe Onsen. A further 20 minute hike takes us to an outside onsen (hot spring) set beside the river, there is a mixed onsen, for both male and female, there is also a female only onsen if preferred. If you don't fancy having a dip, that is fine, there is a restaurant here, a great place to admire the scenery from.

From here we continue along the gorge where you get off before making the journey back again.

From December through April due to the heavy snow in the region the train to the Kurobe Gorge is closed in the winter months and there is no entry. During the winter months the tour will visit Matsumoto instead, around 50 minutes from Nagano where we visit Matsumoto Castle and the old castle district. The following day we go to Takayama and continue as scheduled.

Day 4 - Takayama

Today we go to the mountain town of Takayama, famous for its old preserved quarter and cultural heritage buildings dating back to the Edo era (1603-1868). After arriving we'll beeline for the historical district and visit a sake distillery first where you can sample some of the produce. Afterwards we continue along the atmospheric streets to the Kusakabe House, a merchant house which belonged to a wealthy family we before spit up for some free time. There is plenty to see whether it be shops, historical buildings, restaurants or a hill side walk along the Higashiyama Trail. You must try the local speciality beef too, Hida Beef - delicious!

Day 5 - Shirakawa-go

This morning after breakfast visit the Takayama morning market selling local wares and foods before taking the hour long bus ride today to the village of Shirakawa-go with World Heritage status. The picturesque village is famous for its old thatched farmhouses which until recently was difficult to get to and completely cut off during the winter. During the day the village is busy with tour bus groups but we stay in the village overnight and enjoy it once all the selfie-stick army have trundled off and the locals get back on with life again. Tonight you'll be treated to a traditional home cooked meal in the farmhouse.

Day 6 - Kanazawa

Enjoy a beautiful traditional breakfast this morning in the farmhouse before we take the bus bound for Kanazawa about an hour away. Kanazawa was the second largest city after Kyoto which was fortunate enough to not be bombed during WW2 and has a wealth of things to see and do. Our first stop will be Kenroku-en, the large strolling garden built over a couple of centuries by the ruling Maeda family in the feudal days. Afterward to see the Nomura Samurai residence and its impressive walled garden within the preserved samurai district.

Day 7 - Kyoto

The final leg of the trip we head south on the Thunderbird to Kyoto, Japan's cultural capital where we'll visit Sanjusangendo to conclude the tour. The hall is 120 metres long, the longest wood hall in Japan and houses 1000 human sized Kannon Buddha (goddess of mercy) flanking the main statue in the centre, it's an impressive sight dating back to the 1100s. During the Edo era the side of the hall was used by archers in extraordinary fetes of endurance firing thousands of arrows for long periods of time at a small target at the far end of the hall. Marks from these events can still be seen. The rest of the day is free and you're tour leader will help with any train tickets and advice for your transfer.

Day 8 - End of Tour

Why not stay a few more days in Kyoto? From Kyoto you can go to Osaka for your departing flight, or head back to Tokyo by bullet train. Alternatively you could continue west on a self-guided adventure to Hiroshima or Naoshima, the art island. For more ideas, just drop us a line and we'd be delighted to arrange a self-guided extension for you!

Accommodation



Tokyo - Yaesu Terminal Hotel

A comfortable, clean, and efficient business hotel with helpful staff situated in a great location near Tokyo Station and the Imperial Palace. As you would expect for such a prime piece of real estate, the rooms are not so big but it has everything you need and much more!

LAN and Wifi

Breakfast included



Nagano - Sun Route, Nagano

Hotel situated in a great location near the station.

All rooms have Wifi

Breakfast included.



Kurobe - Entajiso

During Non-Winter (April - November)

Ryokan (tradition Japanese inn), with hot spring facilities and views of the Kurobe gorge.

All rooms have Wifi

Breakfast and dinner included (dinner is traditional kaiseki style with lots of tasty dishes)



Matsumoto - Richmond Hotel

During winter (Dec - April)

Modern business hotel in central location.

All rooms Wifi

Breakfast included



Takayama - Washington Plaza

Hotel across from Takayama station, the perfect place from where to explore.

All rooms have Wifi

Breakfast included



Shirakawa-go - Kidoya Farmhouse

Staying in old traditional gassho-zukuri thatched family home

Homemade breakfast and dinner included

Even has Wifi!



Kanazawa - Daiwa Roynet

Hotel near the station with easy access to all the places of interest.

All rooms have Wifi

Breakfast included



Kyoto - Ibis Styles

Sits across from Kyoto station, the transportation hub of the city with easy access for transferring to the airports of Osaka or Tokyo.

All rooms have Wifi

Breakfast included

Other Information

What is Included?

- ALL accommodation (7 nights)
- The support of your Tour Leader for the entirety of the tour
- ALL Entrance fees to Museums, Temples, Shrines and Gardens when with the guide following the itinerary. Visiting alternative / additional sites at personal expense
- 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 up to one week before the starting date of the tour
- All local transportation is covered while with the guide following the itinerary. Visiting alternative / additional locations at personal expense
- Suica card - An electronic travel card for your convenience (saves fiddling around with tickets especially while in Tokyo!)
- Baggage forwarding for one bag per person
- Breakfast every morning
- Group meal on Day 1 in Tokyo (Alcoholic drinks included!)
- Dinner at Kurobe on Day 3 (Kaiseki - traditional meal with lots of tasty dishes!)
- Dinner on Day 5 (Traditional Teishoku) at farmhouse in Shirakawa-go
- 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
- Any coin lockers that you may use
- Airport transfer at the end of the tour / or back to Tokyo / or Osaka. Please contact us regarding the cost of this.
- Travel Insurance. You must take out travel insurance before travelling to Japan, we suggest this is done soon after a booking has been made.
- Flights to and from Japan!

Payments

After a booking request has been made through the "Make a Booking" section of this website, your booking will be processed. We'll email you back to confirm it along with your invoice and payment details, we accept payments by card or bank transfer. The deposit of GBP 300 / USD 400 per person is requested within 7 days to confirm your booking. The balance is due by 12 weeks prior to the tour departure date. All payment made to us are protected by the TTA (Travel Trust Association). Our membership number is U6165.

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 Northern Route Tour is suitable for ages of around 12 and upwards, and is ideal for families, couples, and singles alike.

Our only 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 walk around 3 to 5 kilometres per day, steps are involved at some of the tourist sites we visit as are slopes. Most stations do have escalators but not all and an extended time is spent on the feet each day. If you have any questions about this, please just let us know.

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. 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 in 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! At times, particularly in Kyoto when using the city bus it might not always be possible to sit. For longer journeys we use the bullet train and seats are reserved in advance.

Some of the accommodation on the tour is more basic than our other tours.

Baggage Forwarding

We do at times forward your main cases ahead from one hotel to another (one case per person) allowing you to travel light and easy keeping things as fun as possible. If you bring too much luggage with you, or buy too many souvenirs during the tour and require additional use of the service, this can easily be arranged.

Minimum Numbers

The minimum number of passengers on the Northern Route Tour is two.

Single Supplement

Because we keep the group size to a maximum of 8, unfortunately we have to charge a single supplement of £ 250 if travelling alone. For this you'll be ensured to have a room to yourself for the entirety of the tour, except for when staying at the traditional ryokan, here we may ask you to share a room with another member of the group of the same sex. If you have any questions about this, please drop us a line.

If the Northern Route Tour to Kyoto isn't for you, have a look at our other tours to Japan, we have a fantastic selection of tours for all tastes and budgets.