



Japan Holidays
EXCLUSIVE TOUR

THE REAL LAST SAMURAI & HIDDEN CHRISTIANS TOUR

Saturday 16 May 2020 - Thursday 28 May 2020

From \$8100 per person



TOUR DESCRIPTION

Trip Details:

Tour begins:

Saturday 16 May 2020 in Kumamoto

Tour ends:

Thursday 28 May 2020 in Tokyo

Period:

13 Days | 12 Nights

Included:

- Daily Breakfast, 6 Lunches, 6 Dinners (B/L/D)
- 12 Nights accommodation Western or traditional Japanese *ryokans*
- Transfers, tours & entrances as per itinerary
- Private guides in Japan throughout tour
- Private escort/historian for 7 days

Not Included:

- International & Domestic Flights

Price: \$8100 per person, twin share

Price subject to exchange rate & based on a minimum of 4 travellers.

Highlights:

- **The Nature:** Enjoy breathtaking volcanic landscapes, mountains, waterfalls, and coastlines.
- **The Relaxation:** Soak up the simplicity and charm of real Japan in soothing *onsens* - inside and outdoors!
- **The Unique Landscapes:** See Japan's biggest caldera and active volcano up close.
- **The Samurai Clans:** Learn about Japan's fiercest samurais, their battlegrounds, hidden refuges and the greatest swordsman of all - Musashi Miyamoto.
- **The Tastes:** Indulge in unforgettable feasts and a wide array of local delicacies you'll find nowhere else.
- **The Excitement:** Tokyo and Kyoto have a vibrant nightlife that rivals cosmopolitan centers of the world, along with ancient traditions enjoyed off the beaten path.
- **The Space:** More than just crowds, hustle and bustle of the big cities, Japan also offers the lush and tranquil *inaka* of the countryside.
- **The Culture:** Explore fascinating historical sights stretching all the way back to Japan's foundation myths.
- **The Activities** - Indulge in shopping, crafts, site-seeing, train rides, temples, gardens, castles and boutiques in your free time!

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ITINERARY

Day 1

Saturday, 16 May (L/D)

Arrive in Kumamoto in the morning, where you'll be met by your tour guide for the trip, Ken Takenaga. You're in for a full day of nature, culture historical attractions and crafts.

- **Suizenji Japanese Garden** – A miniature recreation of the 53 post stations of the Tokaido with Mt. Fuji in this lovely garden.
- **Jyosai En Cultural Center** – A unique "virtual reality" exhibit brings to life the castle, clans and conflict of the region.
- **Lunch:** Sumptuous buffet lunch at Ginnan.
- **Kumamoto Castle** – See the 2016 earthquake damage and current reconstruction efforts at this historical castle complex.
- **Local crafts and shopping** – Shop for a wide range of traditional Japanese gifts at the Prefectural Traditional Craft Center: knives, foods and crafts.



Accommodation (2 nights): Hotel Nikko Kumamoto



Day 2

Sunday, 17 May (B/L/D)

Today you'll see why Kumamoto is referred to as "The Land of Fire and Water".

- **Daikanbou Observation Point** – You'll not only enjoy a spectacular, 360-degree view of the Aso Valley and the Five Mountains of Aso (which resemble a sleeping Buddha), but also the world's largest caldera, which measures 120km around. Weather permitting, we'll visit Nakadake active volcano.
- **Local hotplate lunch** – We're in for a treat unique to the Aso region: Higo steak, which is tender, low-fat beef grilled over charcoal.
- **Tabarazuka Battleground** – Satsuma samurais fought government troops here during the fierce Seinan Civil War of 1877 - Japan's last civil war.
- **Dinner** – Enjoy more tastes of the region.

Day 3

Monday, 18 May (B/L/D)

Today we travel into the past to Gokanoshō, the very cauldron of conflict between warring samurai clans.

- **Gokanoshō** – Dubbed "Land of the Last Samurai", villages here are home to the Heike clan's fugitive legend. Far off the beaten path of typical tours, Gokanoshō is a rare treat for tourists enjoyed by a privileged few.
- **Sendan Todoto Waterfall and Suspension Bridges** – A short hike down to a spectacular waterfall and a walk across the swinging suspension bridges offer glimpses of the mysterious forests here.
- **Heike-so Minshuku** – Enjoy a memorable, multi-course *kaiseki* dinner at this historical inn, where the hospitality is world-class, and the local moonshine not to be missed.

Accommodation (1 night): Heike-so Minshuku



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Day 4

Tuesday, 19 May (B/L/D)

After a multi-course Japanese breakfast, we depart the Heike-So for Amakusa, crossing five scenic bridges strung out like a necklace of pearls. Enjoy stunning scenery of the West Coast with its picturesque rice paddies by the sea.

- **Honda Pearl Center** – These high quality pearls are in demand at the finest stores in Tokyo and the Ginza, making a unique and peerless gift.
- **Amakusa Christian Museum** – The ultra-modern architecture of this museum belies the 400 years of "hidden Christians" who kept the faith in secret to avoid persecution.
- **Sakitsu Church** – Rebuilt three times since the Meiji period, the latest design is a striking Gothic style, commissioned by Father Harubu in 1934. Located in a picturesque harbor, the area around the church and cliffside statue of St. Mary has been designated one of Japan's Most Beautiful Beaches and 100 Best Sceneries.
- **Oe Cathedral Church** – The personal funds of Father Frédéric Louis Garnier were used to construct this Romanesque-style church in 1933, as a testament to the faith of Christians. The chapel displays rare sacred paintings as well as statues of Father Garnier and the Virgin Mary.
- **Dinner** – An amazing seafood dinner right at the hotel is on the menu tonight.

Accommodation (1 night): Amakusa Santa Coming Hotel

Day 5

Wednesday, 20 May (B,L,D)

After breakfast, we depart Amakusa on a vehicular ferry to Shimabara.

- **Ruin of Hara Castle** – The battleground of the Christian rebellion in the year 1637 will provide an insight into how the rebellion forces were defeated in this famous last battle.
- **Mt Fugen** – Inspect Mt Fugen which last erupted in 1995 and view the associated volcanic museum.
- **Shimabara Castle** – Try on traditional armour and view the castle sight sights from the top.

This evening, we stay in a traditional Japanese style *ryokan*.

Accommodation (1 night): Iseya Ryokan Obama



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Day 6

Thursday, 21 May (B/L/D)

Today the tour travels to Nagasaki.

- **Nuclear Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Park** – Follow the history of this event beginning with the disastrous scene of the attack, the events leading up to the dropping of the atomic bomb, the reconstruction of Nagasaki up to the present day, the history of nuclear weapons development, and the hope for a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons.
- **Urakami Cathedral** – built by the persecuted Christians in 1914, was once renowned for being the largest Roman Catholic church in the East but was completely demolished by the nuclear blast.
- **Nagasaki City** - Visit the Dutch Village and enjoy the port city of Nagasaki. Discover the Portuguese and Dutch influences and take some time out to do some shopping and sample the famous chanpon noodles.
- **Dinner** – Dine at a local restaurant for dinner.

Accommodation (1 night): Hotel JAL City Nagasaki

Day 7

Friday, 22 May (B)

After breakfast, we depart Nagasaki by *shinkansen* bound for Hiroshima.

- **Saijo Sake Town** - With your guide, visit Saijo's breweries, learn about sake brewing, do a bit of tasting and have a chance to purchase sake and other products. Absorb the unique, traditional feel of sake breweries that colour the streets of Saijo and experience first-hand what makes Saijo one of Japan's premier sake brewing neighbourhoods.

Accommodation (2 nights): Hotel Intergate Hiroshima



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Day 8

Saturday, 23 May (B)

Hiroshima/Miyajima Day Tour – You're in for a guided day rich with history and culture, stunning scenery and panoramic views.

- **Miyajima** – One of Japan's top must-see sites. There are great hikes and good eats, nature and historical culture that dates back more than 600 years.
- **Itsukushima Shrine** – At high or low tide, the ethereal, "floating" torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine imbues an iconic impression as soon as you arrive.
- **Momijidani Park and Ropeway** – Stroll this magical park, where cherry blossoms are in full bloom. Then glide up the Miyajima Ropeway and admire a lofty view of the seaside below from your gondola.
- **Daisho-in Temple** – Nestled in stunning foliage at all times of the year, the Daisho-in Temple is one of the prettiest sites in the park.

Day 9

Sunday, 24 May (B)

A quick *shinkansen* to Kyoto frees most of the day to explore this remarkable city, which once served as Japan's Imperial capital. Consider these options to fill your day:

- **Option 1** – The Nishiki Food Market – or "Kyoto's Kitchen". Stroll through several city blocks of more than 100 vendors selling seafood, shellfish, pickles, teas, knives, cookware, fabrics, clothing, gift items and more.
- **Option 2** – Shop Kyoto's Gion district by day. You'll find arts, handicrafts and gift items unique to Kyoto, as well as a range of international restaurants.
- **Option 3** – Just a 20-minute walk from our hotel is the bustling Kyoto Station. This multi-story "mall" is a treasure-trove of department stores, gift shops, Daiso, food markets and restaurants with every conceivable cuisine.
- **Gion night walking tour** – We'll meet up at night to stroll the romantic back streets of the Gion district – quintessential scenes of Japan literally out of the classic "Memoirs of a Geisha"!



Accommodation: (2 nights) Hotel Intergate Kyoto Shijoshinmachi



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Day 10

Monday, 25 May (B)

Kyoto Day Tour – We'll take public transportation to see the top attractions on our day-long guided trip. Each of today's sites will leave a lasting impression of Japan's rich history, deep religious beliefs and appreciation for nature.

- **Kinkaku-ji** – With its gold leaf facade, Kinkaku-ji seems to float above a tranquil lake; exquisite garden paths meander through the grounds of this temple dating from the 1300s.
- **Kiyomizu-dera** – This renowned Buddhist temple complex dating from 780 AD features an imposing deck with spectacular views of Kyoto.
- **Fushimi Inari Shrine** – Several blocks of vendor stalls line the way to this famous shrine with its thousands of vermilion torii gates, hiking trails and iconic fox images.
- **Arashiyama** – Enjoy this photogenic, hilly region near Kyoto.
- **Sagano Bamboo Forest and Togetsu-kyo Bridge** – We complete the day with a visit to the area's largest Zen Buddhist temple and UNESCO World Heritage site.

Day 11

Tuesday, 26 May (B)

A 3-hour *shinkansen* takes us to Tokyo. En-route, enjoy the scenery and on-board refreshments such as bento box or snacks.

Tokyo is filled with entertainment options - take an evening river cruise under the Rainbow Bridge at Odaiba, experience art in a new way at Team Borderless Digital Art Museum, dine at the crazy Robot Restaurant - just ask us for ideas!

Accommodation (2 nights): Park Hotel Tokyo



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Day 12

Wednesday, 27 May (B)



Tokyo Day Tour – Prepare for an unforgettable day with our guided tour in Japan's capital. This city of 14 million is packed with diverse neighbourhoods and many downtowns. There are river cruises, palaces, temples, gardens, unparalleled shopping and vibrant night-life!

- **Tokyo Skytree** – This towering, iconic landmark is seen even as you land. At 634 meters in height, the Tokyo Skytree's 360-degree views stun! Shops, restaurants and an aquarium are the attractions here.
- **Imperial Palace** – Completed in 1888, Japan's Imperial Palace is a lovely, graceful complex that houses the Imperial Family as well as public gardens and tranquil boating through the gardens.
- **Meiji Shrine** – An imposing torii gate marks the entrance to Japan's most popular Shinto shrine complex, which includes an enchanting forest planted with 100,000 trees.
- **Sensoji Temple** – Completed in 645 AD, this Buddhist temple is Tokyo's oldest, and most popular. The colourful Asakusa shopping district lines the streets between the temple gates.

Day 13

Thursday, 28 May (B)

Free time to explore Tokyo on your own. Ask us for great ideas on the best way to spend your last day in Tokyo.

Depart in the evening.

Departures

Your Japan Holidays tour guide will assist with any transfers to the nearest station for connecting trains, planes or buses for your return home or on to your next destination.



End of Tour...Sayonara!

**OPTIONAL EXTENSION TOURS AVAILABLE
PLEASE ENQUIRE**

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About Japan Holidays

Our team of travel specialists are experts on Japan. Their language proficiency and in-depth knowledge of customs, locations, and how to get around effortlessly is unsurpassed by many travel companies. This expertise has been honed by living in Japan or repeated visits. You'll enjoy peace of mind with our specialists managing every detail of your tour, from transportation to dining and accommodation. Japan Holidays is supported by an office in Japan, staffed with local experts who are available to assist you if needed while there.

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