

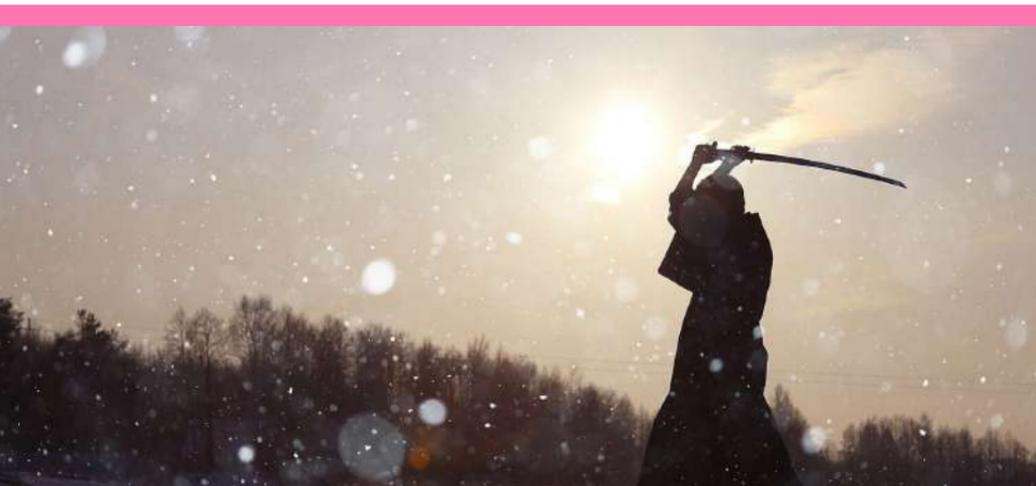


*Japan Holidays*  
EXCLUSIVE TOUR

# CHERRY BLOSSOM TRAIL AND LAST SAMURAI 2021

Thursday 18th March – Saturday 27th March 2021

From \$8,000pp Twin Share Based on Min 4 pax



# TOUR DESCRIPTION

## Trip Details:

### Tour begins:

Thursday 18th March 2021

### Tour ends:

Saturday 27th March 2021

### Period:

10 Days / 9 Nights

### Included:

- Daily breakfasts & lunches, 8 dinners
- 8 Nights accommodation Western & traditional Japanese *Ryokans*
- Transfers, tours & entrance fees as per itinerary
- Private escort / guide in Japan

### Not Included:

- International & domestic flights

**Price: \$8,000 pp Twin Share**

***(Single Supplement from \$1,500 Additional)***

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

## Highlights:

On this unforgettable tour you'll enjoy the colours, culture and creative history of Japan. This tour takes you from serene gardens bursting with cherry blossoms to geological wonders of natural beauty.

- Stroll through colorful Japanese gardens of Kumamoto, after partaking in a traditional tea ceremony.
- View spectacular cherry blossoms and picturesque waterfalls.
- Experience Heike clan samurai family life as their guest, enjoying intimate meals around an open fire-pit.
- View Mount Aso's dramatic landscape and active volcano caldera up-close.
- Enjoy creating traditional handicrafts such as indigo dyeing and pottery making.
- Luxuriate in hot spring bathing in onsens and local Japanese Inns.
- Feel the warmth of the local hospitality and cuisine unique to the Kyushu area.

Book today at:  
[www.japanholidays.com.au](http://www.japanholidays.com.au)



# ITINERARY

## Day 1 - Thursday, 18th March

Arrive to Tokyo and after exiting Customs transfer via Limousine Bus to Royal Park Hotel Haneda.

**Accommodation: Royal Park Haneda Hotel, (1 night)**



## Day 2 - Friday, 19th March

Depart your hotel after breakfast for a short flight to Fukuoka, where you'll be met at the airport by Ken Takenaga, your engaging guide throughout this tour. You're in for a day of cultural immersion and uniquely Japanese entertainment.

- **Dazaifu Tenman-gū** – As far back as the 7th century, this shrine promoted learning, sincerity and protection from evil. The approach to Dazaifu Tenman-gū is lined with 80 shops, including a uniquely beautiful Starbucks fashioned from 2,000 cedar beams and no nails!
- **Lunch:** We'll have lunch at a local restaurant, where you can enjoy a variety of traditional dishes, after which we depart for Yamaga City, just an hour away.
- **Yachiyoza Kabuki Theater** – In its heyday, Yamaga was a bustling commerce centre and *onsen* (hot springs bathing) destination. To entice travellers, local merchants built the Yachiyoza ("Eternal Place") Kabuki Theatre in a beautiful, Edo-style, now a National Important Asset. Here, you'll marvel at the theatre's elaborate decor and stage, which features trapdoors and a rotating panel for scene changes.
- **Dinner:** Gourmet experience at one of Kumamoto's favourite restaurants.

**Accommodation: Hotel Nikko Kumamoto, (3 nights)**



# ITINERARY

## Day 3 - Saturday, 20th March

You are in for a full day of nature, culture, historical attractions and enjoyable shopping.

- **Suizenji Japanese Garden** – A magical tour in miniature of the 53 post stations of the Tokaido is arrayed in this beautifully blossomed, story-book garden. Look for the replica of Mt. Fuji.
- **Jyosai En Cultural Center** – Experience Kumamoto's remarkable history through a unique "virtual reality" exhibit that brings to life the castle, clans and conflict of the region.
- **Lunch:** Satisfy your craving for local fare at Ginnan, Kumamoto's popular buffet.
- **Kumamoto Castle** – Heavily damaged in the April 2016 earthquake, the castle is closed for repairs, but we'll stroll to the grounds and learn about the castle's prominence in Kumamoto's history as well as ongoing reconstruction efforts.
- **Local crafts and shopping** – At the Kumamoto Prefectural Traditional Craft Center, you'll enjoy a wide range of traditional Japanese goods, including bamboo, woodworking, pottery, textiles, gourmet knives, souvenirs and delectable food items. We wrap up the day with more shopping at the renowned Tsuruya Department Store for exceptional housewares, clothing and gift items.



## Day 4 - Sunday, 21st March

Today you will see first-hand why Kumamoto is referred to as The Land of Fire and Water. Stunning views and refreshing spring waters will quench your spirits.

- **Daikanbou Observation Point** – From this unique observation point, you will 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 at Mt. Aso, which measures 120km around.
- **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.
- **Aso Shrine** – Dating from 2,200 years ago, 12 deities are enshrined here, and a special pine tree is believed to bestow good luck in marriage. After touring the shrine area, we'll stroll the nearby streets, tasting a range of refreshing spring waters offered by several shops.
- **Dinner:** Tonight, we'll enjoy more local tastes of the region.



# ITINERARY

## Day 5 - Monday, 22nd March

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. Redolent with roaring waterfalls, dramatic suspension bridges and mysterious forests, the beauty of Gokanoshō is an experience that will pierce your soul. 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** – Hike in a lush forest to the Sendan Todoto Waterfall, which cascades down steep ravines and gushes into rocky coves below. Walk across suspension bridges that link remote pockets of forest villages, each one offering a stunning view into deep ravines and streambeds far below.
- **Heike-so Minshuku** – Your life may be forever changed spending just a single night at this traditional, remote inn. The Heike-so transports you back to an era in which travellers trekked from outpost to outpost, luxuriating at rustic inns that provided elaborate meals and a relaxing bath at the end of the day. Your room here will be in the traditional Japanese style, but the hospitality and culinary experience is unforgettably world-class.
- **Kaiseki Dinner** – Expect a sumptuous feast around open fire pits; the local “moonshine” is not to be missed!



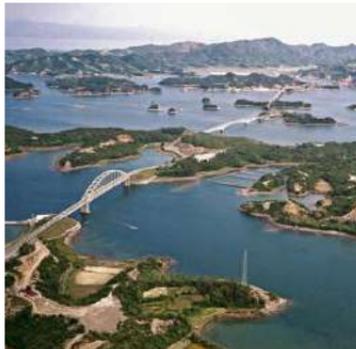
**Accommodation: Heiko-So Minshuku, (1 night)**

## Day 6 - Tuesday, 23rd March

We leave Gokanoshō after a traditional Japanese breakfast, stopping in Yatsushiro City before embarking on a beautiful drive to Japan’s pearl enclave. We then visit a site rich with religious history and unspoken secrets, before ending the day with an amazing seafood dinner at our hotel.

- **Yatsushiro City** – Here you will be dressed in exquisite Japanese kimono before partaking in the ancient tradition of the tea ceremony. After tea, stroll the beautiful gardens here in kimono for a memorable photo opportunity.
- **Amakusa** – We depart after lunch for Amakusa, crossing five scenic bridges strung out like a necklace to this city renowned for Japan’s most beautiful pearls.
- **Amakusa Christian Museum** – The ultra-modern architecture of this museum belies the long history of Christianity in Amakusa, which dates from 1566. Exhibits include the secret, sacred objects carried for hundreds of years by Amakusa’s “hidden Christians” to avoid persecution.

**Accommodation: Amakusa Santa Coming Hotel, (2 nights)**



# ITINERARY

## Day 7 - Wednesday, 24th March

Today's drive treats you to opalescent scenes along the East China Sea, past verdant rice fields, and to sites of religious significance entwining East with West over many centuries.

- **Local Ceramic Factory** – At the Jyoho pottery factory, we'll see how typical pottery is made in Japan, with an opportunity to buy some of the wares.
- **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.
- **Hanami (Cherry Blossom) Party** – Celebrate Japan's annual festival, enjoying traditional bento box dinner and drinks under exquisite cherry trees in full bloom!



# ITINERARY

## Day 8 - Thursday, 25th March

After breakfast, we take a short ferry to Shimabara, where you'll enjoy an exciting day of castles and conflict, tales of explosive volcanology, topped off with a good hot soak in a historic spa.

- **Hara Castle Ruins** – Here, a fierce battle took place in 1637, in which tens of thousands of Christians were slaughtered under royal decree, after they rebelled against draconian laws.
- **Mt. Fugen Volcanic Museum, Unzen** – When this volcano erupted unexpectedly in 1991, it took the lives of 43 scientists, journalists, film makers and photographers. We learn more about the underlying geology in the exhibits here.
- **Shimabara Castle** – Resembling a beautiful wedding cake, this castle required exorbitant taxes for its completion, leading to the Shimabara Rebellion in the 17th century, followed by the prohibition of Christianity. Today, this major tourist attraction offers multiple floors with fascinating exhibits, stunning views at the top, and the opportunity to don either a warrior's armor or lovely kimono for a memorable photo keepsake!
- **Hot Spring Spa** – Relax at day's end with a long, contemplative soak in a hot spring bath at our destination in Takeo City, renowned for its 1,300-year-old hot spring spa, reputed to leave one's skin soft and supple.



**Accommodation: Iseya Ryokan Obama, (1 nights)**

## Day 9 - Friday, 26th March

We combine a deep appreciation for nature with hands-on creativity today, as we wrap up a memorable tour with a genuine, hand-crafted article to remember the trip by.

- **Takeo Shrine and Camphor Tree** – This ancient Shinto Shrine, reputed to be 1,200 years old, is also the location of a unique treasure: a magnificent, 3,000-year-old camphor tree and shrine, located in a serene bamboo forest.
- **Indigo Dyeing Workshop** – After a local lunch, you're in for a real treat! We meet Master Ogata, indigo specialist, at his **Akane Indigo Studio**. Here, you'll learn traditional Japanese indigo dyeing techniques, which you'll employ to make your own unique indigo scarf.
- **Kaiseki dinner** – We return to the hotel to relax in the spa before indulging in a fabulous, multi-course kaiseki dinner.

**Accommodation: Takeo Onsen Hotel Toyokan, (1 nights)**



# ITINERARY

## Day 10 - Saturday, 26th March

Japan's ceramics and pottery industries are legend. Before leaving Japan, you'll tour one of the most renowned ceramic centers in the country in Arita, and have a last opportunity to buy that special gift or keepsake!

- **Kyushu Ceramics Museum, Arita** – Unassuming and contemporary from the outside, this museum not only showcases exquisite ceramic works, but has a jaw-dropping "Rube Goldberg" clock inside. We'll make every effort to time our visit for the top o' the hour! You'll want to get your cameras rolling.
- **Departure Day** – After lunch at a local restaurant, we will meet Master Koga at the **Kameokina Kiln**. Master Koga is a famous potter using the clay of Takeo and you will have chance to make your own product.

### Departure

Your Japan Holidays Guide will assist with transfers to the nearest station for connecting trains, planes or buses onto your next destination and/or to return home.



*End of Tour....Sayonara!*

***OPTIONAL EXTENSION TOURS AVAILABLE  
PLEASE ENQUIRE***

### Your Japan Holidays Escort - Mr Ken Takenaga

Born in Yatsushiro City, Kumamoto Prefecture, on the island of Kyushu in southern Japan, Ken moved to the USA as a teenager. He was immersed in American culture and language, which he combines with his deep understanding of Japan's colourful history in a way few tour guides accomplish. Ken's passion for and profound knowledge of southern Japan's history and key historical sites plus his fluency in English make him the perfect guide for English-speaking tourists here. He is a rare combination of military precision, comprehensive knowledge, and genuine connection, qualities invaluable as a tour guide for both large groups or smaller custom tours. Ken has more than a decade of experience guiding groups.



*Japan Holidays*



## *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..*

## *Contact us*

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