



JAPAN SPRING TOUR

GUIDED, SMALL GROUP, PERSONALIZED
MAXIMUM 10 PARTICIPANTS

April 6 – April 18, 2012

ART, CULTURE, GARDENS, BONSAI, CHERRY BLOSSOM

**This tour is in Western Japan, an area unaffected by the earthquake and tsunami.
There has been no radiation from the Fukushima Nuclear Plant in this area.**

Okayama

Black Crow castle and Korakuen, one of Japan's three most highly rated stroll gardens

Takamatsu

Eight hundred year old Ritsurin landscaped garden, Shikoku Mura open air museum of traditional buildings, Kinashi bonsai village

Naoshima

Tadao Ando-designed Benesse House gallery and hotel, contemporary art installations in traditional fishing village houses - one of the "seven places in the world you should see next" in Conde Nast Traveler magazine

Kyoto

Geishas, gardens, temples, history, fine art and folk craft, cobbled streets, markets, Zen meditation

Nara

Todaiji, the world's largest wooden building, with Japan's largest bronze Buddha statue

Uji

UNESCO World Heritage listed Byodoin (Phoenix Hall), the world's oldest wooden structure, built in 1053

Inuyama

Feudal castle, river-side spring festival, lantern-lit floats, hot spring baths, delicious Kaiseki meals

12 nights

Land only AU\$4200 twin share includes all accommodation, local transport, breakfasts, entries, and several dinners

Enquiries, full itinerary, and bookings
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Experience traditional and contemporary Japan with the constant care and guidance of your Japanese speaking tour facilitator



Gillian Jones has postgraduate qualifications in Education, Advanced Group Facilitation, Japanese Language and Culture, and Experiential and Creative Arts Therapies. She was director of a private cross-cultural educational exchange organization for 18 years and has taught Japanese Language and Business Culture at RMIT, and cross-cultural communication in organizations.

Gillian delights in sharing her love of Japanese culture and making it accessible to others. She embraces the Japanese Zen philosophy of "ichi-go ichi-e" "One time, one meeting" which emphasizes the unique opportunity presented by each interaction. Consequently there is always room in her tours for consideration of each person's interests and exploration of serendipitous opportunities.

ITINERARY

Friday April 6

The tour begins in Osaka.* We will stay this night in a hotel close to the airport so that we are relaxed and rested for our first day of sightseeing. Those who may have arrived in Japan earlier can meet us at the airport hotel or at Osaka, Nagoya, or Inuyamayuen station on day 2.

Accommodation: Western style airport hotel

Saturday April 7 and Sunday April 8



These two days will be spent in the castle town of Inuyama on the shores of the picturesque Kiso River, known as the Rhine of Japan. Inuyama celebrates a spring festival over these two days. On the Saturday evening huge wheeled floats are covered with candle-lit lanterns and pulled through the streets by traditionally dressed young men to the sounds of flutes and drums and the cheers of the crowd. The next day, each float is presented to the shrine and the top section of the float becomes a

stage for the performance of folk tales by mechanical dolls manipulated by strings from within the float.

We can visit the castle originally built in 1537 by Oda Nobuyasu, grandfather of the great warlord Oda Nobunaga. The castle survived all wars and has remained unchanged since it was built, making it the oldest original wooden castle in Japan.



The Urakuen garden and the Jo-an teahouse inside the garden, built by Urakusai Oda, a brother of Nobunaga Oda, and designated a National Treasure in 1936, as one of the three best extant tea-ceremony buildings in Japan is in the grounds of the hotel in which we will be staying.

Accommodation: Hot-spring ryokan/hotel where we will experience the luxury of long hot soaks, superior western-style accommodation, and sumptuous Japanese breakfasts and dinners.

Monday April 9, Tuesday April 10, Wednesday April 11

There is so much to see in and around Kyoto that exactly where will be go on these days will be confirmed closer to departure and with reference to the interests of the group participants. Some examples are:

Nijo palace This palace, built in 1603, was the Kyoto residence of the Tokugawa Shogun. It boasts many interior decorations by famous artists of the Momoyama period and is well known for its "nightingale floor" over which even the most-stealthy ninja could not walk silently. The castle and garden, designed by Kobori Enshu are designated as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. During spring the 400 cherry trees of Nijo palace gardens are lit up.





Koju-en Bonsai nursery This nursery is owned by Hiroichi Masumi (former President of All Japan Shohin Bonsai Association) and Tomohiro Masumi (Managing director of the Association)

Shosei-en Built in the ninth century, this garden features classic austere Japanese design elements with several tea houses, a large pond, a small waterfall, and many stone lanterns

Kawai Kanjiro's house Kawai Kanjiro (1890-1966) was one of the leaders of the mingei (folk art) movement which encouraged appreciation of the works of ordinary craftsmen, that had been brushed aside and overlooked by the industrial revolution, and that spoke to the spiritual and practical needs of life. Kawai's house is now a museum showing the beauty with which he lived.

Aizenkobo is an indigo-dyeing workshop that has been in operation for three generations. Aizenkobo produces and promotes indigo handicraft work using the traditional Japanese method. Its "eggplant" blue is impossible to reproduce with artificial chemical pigments. Various items, from clothing to tapestries, are displayed in the shop.

Nishiki Koji market Often referred to as "the kitchen of Kyoto", this market street is stone paved and there are something like 120-150 vendors here selling everything from fresh fish, vegetables, and dry goods, to boiled fish paste, pickled vegetables, and sweets. Listening to the shouts of the traders, tasting the delicacies and taking in the aromas and atmosphere is a great Kyoto experience.

Accommodation: Western style hotel, Japanese style ryokan, or temple (to be confirmed) with breakfast. We will stay in Kyoto for 5 nights and have the following day trips to Nara and Uji



Thursday April 12



Nara is Japan's first capital, established in 710, and is best known for Todaiji temple's Buddha hall and its cute but rather insistent deer in Nara Park. It is an easy walk from there to the other World Heritage sites, such as, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, one of the most important Shinto Shrines in Japan which in accordance with the Shinto need for purification, is destroyed and rebuilt every 20 years.

Friday April 13

A short train ride will take us to scenic riverside town of Uji. We will visit the classically beautiful Phoenix Hall of Byodoin which boasts the most beautiful of Japan's few remaining Pure Land Gardens, a garden type which was popular during the Heian Period, drink delicious Uji green tea, and picnic under the cherry blossoms.



Saturday April 14

We travel by Shinkansen bullet train to Okayama where we will spend the afternoon strolling through Korakuen Garden. Korakuen is one Japan's official Three Great Gardens. The name means "Garden of Pleasure After", a reference to a famous Confucian quote stating that a wise ruler must attend to his subjects' needs first and only then attend to his own.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast



Sunday April 15, Monday April 16, and Tuesday April 17



We cross over the inland sea by train to the island of Shikoku. We will spend three nights in the port town of Takamatsu. On April 15 we will settle into our hotel and then take a short train ride to the experience the exchange market at Kinashi bonsai village where the specialities are Kuromatsu and Goyomatsu and Nishiki-matsu.

On April 16 we will have our only early start of the trip so that we can catch the 8:15 ferry to Naoshima where we will spend the day visiting the Art House Project and the Ando designed galleries.



On April 17 we will visit superb Ritsurin-koen garden, also considered one of Japan's finest, took over a century to complete from the time it was first laid in the mid-1600's. It has excellent English signage and several original teahouses, including the Kikugetsu-tei or "Chrysanthemum Moon Teahouse". As this will be our last evening together we will celebrate by sharing a meal, highlights, and possibly the haiku poems which we have written as reflections on our experiences.

On April 18, our last day together, we will have time to visit Shikokumura, an open air museum of traditional country houses and do any last minute shopping in Takamatsu's covered shopping arcades. Those returning to Australia will catch an evening flight that has us arriving back in Australia on the morning/early afternoon of April 19*.

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast and 1 dinner

* Air travel

This tour begins and ends in Osaka. Air travel and insurance is not included in the cost of this tour. Arrangements for air travel and insurance are the full responsibility of each participant. There will be opportunities to discuss options.

BOOKING DEADLINE: Friday Nov 11, 2011 FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Wednesday Nov 30, 2011

ORIENTATION: Sunday Nov 13, 2011 - An opportunity for all participants to meet in an informal environment to share their expectations, hopes, interests, and concerns and to get to know each other while enjoying home-cooked Japanese food.