

# Exploratory Tour of Japan: Society & Culture (9 days)



Departs anytime (2018 -19)



**Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school's particular aims, learning objectives and budget.**

**Please contact us detailing any changes you'd like to make.**

Japan is truly timeless; a country where centuries-old traditions are fused with modern life as if it were the most natural thing in the world. It is precisely this quality and ability to adapt that makes Japan so alluring, as students will discover on this journey into the culture and mindset of this amazing country.

Beginning in Tokyo, the world's most populous metropolis, we will take in the city's vibrant districts and centres of youth culture before travelling to Hakone (Mt. Fuji) by the iconic *Shinkansen* (bullet train). From here we will journey south to Kyoto, steeped in ancient traditions and laden with classical architecture. We will also visit Hiroshima, where the first atomic bomb was dropped during World War II, to learn of the legacy of this tumultuous event. Our final destination will be the powerful commercial hub of Osaka.

This trip will be of interest to those seeking insight into the cultural and historical influences that have shaped contemporary Japan. The itinerary further includes a tour of Toyota's industrial design facility, an exposé of Japan's fine art scene as well as interaction with our Japanese contemporaries at a local school.

Most importantly, this trip is also designed to be highly enjoyable and features several excursions (as well as Student Initiative activities) to provide students with a very memorable and fulfilling introduction to this iconic nation.



David Eales  
Asia Manager

## Day 1

### Arrive Japan (Tokyo)



This afternoon we will be greeted at Tokyo International Airport by our tour leader, who will give a thorough overview of our program before our first adventure.

Following this we will venture out to visit Chuo-Dori street, famed as the centre of the anime pop culture phenomenon. This is sometimes played out by Japanese youth who dress up in costume imitating their favourite cartoon and fantasy characters.

After a delicious Tokyo-style dinner we will visit the city's Shinjuku/ Shibuya districts to experience some of the most vibrant streetscapes and human energy to be experienced anywhere on our planet.

Today we will also visit buzzing Harajuku - renowned for its colourful street art and fashion scene, with quirky vintage clothing stores and cosplay shops along Takeshita street, and more traditional, upmarket boutiques lining leafy Omotesando avenue. Trendy cafes fill the surrounding lanes, while cultural hotspots include the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, hosting cutting-edge temporary exhibitions.

In the early evening, we will arrive at a local eatery to enjoy our first taste of Japanese cuisine – a favourite the world over. (dinner) **Flight details to be advised**

## Day 2

### Tokyo (Student Initiated Activity Day) Hakone

*Prior to travelling to Japan, a Student Educational Adventures staff member will talk to you and your students about specific activities that student might like to add to their itinerary. These activities might be based on students' prior knowledge of the country based on their interests or passions for any aspect of the culture.*

*For example: a visit to a centre of Technology (Panasonic, Sony, Mitsubishi), youth cultural district (Akihabara), martial art activity (Kendo/Judo), Japanese cooking class, sporting pursuits (activity e.g. Sumo, Japanese Baseball, cycling) or designing, creative arts (or performing arts) experiences.*

*Alternatively, we can suggest a great number of highly enjoyable activities including the following:*

#### OPTION 1:

**Manga & Anime (morning activity);** Japan's pop-cultural phenomena of manga - characterised by distinctive characters and backgrounds (hand-drawn or computer-generated) have seen the creation of a visual genre that is unique in all the world. Today we will visit a world-famous manga exhibition or alternatively, take part in a creative workshop. The workshop would allow us to learn the drawing techniques that have spawned a generation of inspiration, procreating the developments of such series like *Pokémon* and the *Transformers*.

#### OPTION 2:



**Meet the Owls at Akihabara (morning activity);** Akihabara, a.k.a. *Akiba* is one of most popular areas to visit in Tokyo, best known for electronic products and home to Otaku culture. Waking down the street of Akihabara is simply entertaining even for Japanese people. If you are not into Japanese Otaku culture such as underground idols, gaming, anime, electronics, then you may have other love to try some of the district's quirky cafes. This includes the *Alice in Wonderland café*, the *Owl café*, *Fishing café*, *High speed sushi café* or the *Monster café* to name just a few!

#### Option 3:



A very special treat awaits us this morning as we venture out this morning to visit a **sumo stable** to learn of this quintessential Japanese sport. During this time, we will learn much about the rituals, traditions and the special diet of the wrestlers. Fast paced, colorful and full of ritual, our experience this morning will offer us a fascinating glimpse into traditional Japanese culture and a fun part of any Tokyo itinerary.

#### OPTION 4:



**Robots & youth culture (morning activity);** Today we will visit Japan's National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation (Miraikan) to learn of Japanese innovation, robotics and new technologies. Despite the recent rise of China, Japan remains at the forefront of quaternary industries and artificial intelligence research. Here we can meet 'ASIMO' – a famous Japanese robot and will have the opportunity to talk to researchers about Japanese robotics and innovations. We will also visit Akihabara District – home to a most amazing array of electronic shops, department stores and information technology exhibition outlets showcasing the bleeding edge of the global electronics technology industry.

#### OPTION 5:



**Kendo (morning activity);** We will take part in a highly enjoyable (and physical!) session of ancient Japanese martial arts - Kendo. Meaning "Way of the Sword", Kendo is the traditional Japanese style of fencing whose roots can be traced to early Samurai. Both a sport and an art form, it aims to achieve a state of balance between the physical and spiritual realm. For many 'Kendokas', Kendo is also a way of living and building of character.

This afternoon we will transfer to Tokyo Station, boarding a very memorable journey on the world-famous bullet train Shinkansen, to the resort town of Hakone. While the

Shinkansen is a symbol of Japanese efficiency, its importance in shaping Japan's economy is much more significant. Most of Japan's population lives in a surprisingly small number of places—only 20 per cent of the country's land is habitable—and a high-speed train is an elegant solution for shuttling workers from one dense city to another. This evening we will arrive in the delightful resort town of Hakone from where we will explore the Mt. Fuji National Park region.

Tonight, we will stay at a traditional Japanese Ryokan to learn more about Japanese customs and its ancient traditions and enjoy a traditional buffet style dining experience. (breakfast, dinner)

#### Day 3

##### Mt Fuji Nagoya



This morning we will depart for a full day excursion to Mt. Fuji and Hakone by private bus. We will arrive at the "5<sup>th</sup> Station" (Yoshida Trail) from where we can enjoy terrific views of Japan's enigmatic Mount Fuji.

After lunch we will travel to nearby Lake Ashi, located in Hakone National Park to board a boat for a short cruise across the lake. The views from our boat are spectacular indeed, from where we may admire the pristine waters surrounding Mt. Komagatake, Mt. Fuji along other mountains.

This afternoon we will disembark our boat and head to the Mt Komagatake

Ropeway, an aerial tram that travels from the shores of Lake Ashi to the top of Mt Komagatake for amazing views of Lake Ashi, the Owakudani volcanic valley and majestic Mt Fuji. Time permitting, we will also visit the Fujiyoshida Sengen Shrine at the mountain's base, as well as enjoy a short trek in an area at the base of the mountain. In the late afternoon, we will once again board the Shinkansen for our trip further south to the city of Nagoya. (breakfast, dinner)

#### Day 4

##### Nagoya (Toyota) Kyoto



We will travel a short distance to the town of Toyota – birthplace and epicentre of the design and manufacturing to the world's most recognisable automobile. During the Meiji periods, the area was a major producer of silk until the decline of the industry in the 1930's, when Kiichiro Toyoda set up the Toyota automobile manufacturing base here. Japanese car manufacturing is today still the benchmark for automobile manufacturing regarding best practice and efficiency which we will learn more about. While here we will also visit the world-famous Toyota Kaikan Museum to learn of its production processes, innovations and patents – in particular,

advances in hybrid, driverless and environmentally friendly cars. Later we will enjoy of a tour of the city's major manufacturing plant.

This afternoon we will depart Toyota and travel to the historic city of Kyoto. On arrival we will have a quick meal before heading out for a thorough exploration of Kyoto. Kyoto served as Japan's capital and the emperor's

residence for over 1000 years. Over the centuries, the city has endured through war and fire outbreaks. We have a short time to stroll around the streets close to our hotel to start to get a feel for the city. (breakfast, dinner)

## Day 5 Kyoto



We will venture out early this morning for a highly enjoyable cycling tour of this picturesque city famous for its quaint streets, delightful temples and gardens. In small groups we will be escorted by local guides, who will show us the lesser travelled parts and explain the city's origins and recent history. Owing to its historic value Kyoto was dropped from the list of target cities for the atomic bomb and spared from bombing raids during World War II. Today countless temples, shrines and other historic priceless structures survive in the city. We will visit the Sanjusangendo – a famous Kyoto temple that was built for Emperor Go-Shirakawa

in 1164 and dedicated to the Bodhisattva Kannon, famous for its numerous carvings dating back 900 years. This afternoon we visit a local school on the outskirts of the city to learn about the Japanese education system and have a chance to interact with local students. While here we will join in on an English-speaking class to learn some basic level Japanese. It is suggested that visiting students prepare in advance a short cultural performance to perform shortly before our farewell.

Time permitting, we will journey through the Bamboo Forest to learn about the local habitat and Japan's impressive efforts to maintain its remaining natural environment. To finish off the day, we will walk along the slopes of Kyoto's Eastern Mountains to experience traditional Kyoto passing small villages, wooden buildings, narrow lanes and traditional merchant shops. Here traders can be seen selling local specialties such as Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, crafts, pickles and sweets that we will have the chance to try. (breakfast, dinner)

## Day 6 Kyoto Hiroshima



We will depart early for our full day excursion to Hiroshima by way of the Shinkansen (bullet train). Arriving at Hiroshima Station by mid-morning, we will continue to drive to Port Miyajimaguchi by private bus. From there we will take a ferry to Miyajima. En route we will visit the beautiful Itsukushima Shrine. For lunch, we will enjoy Okonomiyaki (literally - 'grilled as you like it') - a savoury version of Japanese pancake, made with flour, eggs, shredded vegetables and meat, and topped with a variety of condiments.

We will continue to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. We will visit ground zero directly below where the atomic bomb was detonated, and stroll through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park that was once the site of the city's political and commercial heart.

It is here that we will learn of perhaps the most terrible event of World War II and certainly one of the most tragic in recorded history – the dropping of the first atomic bomb in August 1945, killing and injuring an estimated of 130,000 people. The dropping of the 'A-Bomb' on Hiroshima (and shortly afterwards Nagasaki) was approved by the American military forces with the intention of bringing World War II to a close as fast as possible. It was also prevented the need for American soldiers to invade the Japanese mainland, something which would have very likely dragged the war on for months.

We visit one of the very few remaining buildings still standing in the initial blast zone called the A-Bomb Dome that still has an eerie feeling to it as it stands alone. Our guide will help explain the events and the efforts that went into rebuilding Japan. We will return to Kyoto this evening by train. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

## Day 7 Hiroshima Osaka



After a late checkout, we travel by train to Japan's second largest city, Osaka. While the third largest city in the country, it is the second most important, having been an economic powerhouse for centuries. This afternoon we visit Osaka Castle. It was first built in 1583 and over the centuries was modified and extended.

The castle has had a most tumultuous history. In 1660, lightning ignited the gunpowder warehouse, and the resulting explosion set the castle on fire. During World War II, the weapons arsenal on site here became one of the largest military armouries in the country. American bombing raids targeted the arsenal and damaged the castle tower on August 14, 1945, dropping bombs.

This evening we will head downtown to explore the city busting Shinsekai neighbourhood - a colourful area packed with cafes, curio shops & eateries that was designed as an entertainment district in the early 20th century, and originally modelled after the cities of New York and Paris. Opened in 1912, "Shinsekai" literally means "New World", and is best known for its bright and gaudy atmosphere and countless restaurants and myriad of alley's where we will enjoy a delicious dinner this evening. After dinner, there will be a short time to explore one of Osaka's acclaimed retail precincts before returning to our hotel this evening. (breakfast, dinner)

## Day 8

### Osaka (Universal Studios)



An early start will ensure we get the most out of this unforgettable day - a trip to Japan's incredible Universal Studios. It is a world-class theme park appealing to children and adults of all ages. The studio covers a wide spectrum of entertainment through thrilling rides, shows themed on blockbuster Hollywood movies as well as seasonal events. Recently, *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* was added to their incredible array of attractions, reproducing the world from the Harry Potter stories on a magnificent scale.

There will be ample time today to enjoy all this amazing park has to offer, followed by the park's famous fireworks display in the early evening. (breakfast)

## Day 9

### Depart Osaka ✈

Today is departure day. We will leave our hotel early travelling by fast train (06:00) to make our flight in good time. Our tour leader will take care of all our onward travel arrangements and wave us farewell. (breakfast)

. (breakfast) **Flight details to be advised**

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## Summary

### Grading

**Moderate;** Students will be required to be in good health to get the most out of this trip while any one of reasonable fitness will be able to take part. There are no real physical difficulties however students will be expected to walk every day. It will be necessary for you to carry your own luggage throughout the trip but only for short distances.

### Accommodation

Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels hold a 3-star equivalent rating.

### Transport

Modern air-conditioned bus, train.

### Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members travelling *free of charge*.

▲ [Smaller group sizes can be quoted upon application](#)

### Your Tour Leader

Your tour leader is probably the person who most influences the success of your trip. Thus, Student Educational Adventures employs our own team of meticulously trained student dedicated, local tour leaders - not foreigners, imported at your students' expense with no language skills or insight into your host culture.

These nationals are not only the best folk to show you their country. They are your teachers, translators and an enthusiastic purveyor of authentic experiences. They are there to facilitate your immersion into new cultures and are the bridge between you and the world of education and new experiences.

Your tour leader is always with your students throughout your trip and is thoroughly versed in safety protocols and duty of care responsibilities. This ranges from assisting in the most basic of health and safety measures to ensuring that teachers & students are always safe during our trips. All have been chosen because of their ability to deal with the needs and unique issues associated with escorting young people through this wonderful and at times, most foreign of regions.

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### Inclusions

- All accommodation and transfers, sightseeing and entrance fees for museums, attractions as described in the itinerary
- All internal transport (bullet trains etc.)
- Student Educational Adventures Group Leader throughout your trip
- Local guides where required
- Meals (and water) as listed in the daily itinerary
- Pre-departure support, briefing and planning meetings for students & parents
- 24/7 in-country support

### Exclusions

- International flights to/from Japan
- Some meals
- Japan Visa (not require by many nationalities)