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

Departs anytime (2019-2020)

Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school’s 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.
Day 1
✈ Arrive Japan (Tokyo)

On arrival in Japan (Tokyo) 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. Continuing, 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.

We will also visit buzzing Harajuku - renowned for its colourful street art and fashion scene, with quirky vintage clothing stores and cosplay shops. 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. *(meals: 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:

Activity 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*.

Activity 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 like 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!

Activity 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 today will offer us a fascinating glimpse into this distinct and little understood Japanese sport.
Activity 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.

Activity 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.

Our accommodation tonight will be a Japanese Ryokan. These traditional travellers’ abodes are characterized by their translucent paper screens, sliding doors, straw tatami mats and the Yukata (Japanese dressing gown) which we can change into on arrival to enjoy this essential Japanese experience before a traditional dinner. (meals: 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 “5th 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. (meals: 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 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. *(meals: 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.

Today we will also wander through the city’s delightful 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. *(meals: breakfast, dinner)*

Day 6  
Kyoto ➔ Osaka

After a leisurely Japanese style breakfast, we will depart Kyoto and travel to Osaka. Whilst Kyoto was the city of the courtly nobility, Osaka (大阪) was traditionally the city of the merchant class. Osakans take pride in shedding the conservatism found elsewhere in Japan.

This afternoon we visit Osaka Castle, which 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 became an obvious target, resulting in an air raid by American forces who destroyed large section of the structure that has since been restored.

This evening we will head downtown to explore the city’s vibrant 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. *(meals: breakfast, dinner)*

**Day 7**

**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. *(meals: breakfast, dinner)*

**Day 8**

**Kyoto ↔ Hiroshima**

We will depart early for our journey to Hiroshima by way of the Shinkansen (bullet train). Arriving in Hiroshima by mid-morning, we will set out to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and later today ‘ground zero,’ which is now the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

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 initiated by the American military forces with the intention of bringing World War II to a close as fast as possible. It also prevented the need for American soldiers to invade the Japanese mainland, something which would have very likely dragged the war on for months. Today we will also visit one of the very few remaining buildings still standing in the initial blast zone, as our tour leader explains the events in more detail and the efforts that went into rebuilding Japan after this period.

On this, our last evening in Japan we will enjoy a performance of *Kagura*. The famous Japanese theatrical presentation features a performance by highly skilled actors with distinctively gorgeous costumes and large masks and is one of the most popular forms of Japanese entertainment. Each performance features different collaborative shows of samurai sword fighting, Wadaiko drumming, and Shakuhachi flute playing. English translations have been prepared and made available for these two programs, including interpretation services and projection of English translations for the lines spoken by performers. When the entire program is over, members of the audience can try on the costumes and other articles worn by the Kagura troupe and other performers, as well as take photos with them. *(meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

**Day 9**

**Depart Hiroshima (via Osaka or Tokyo) for flight home**

This morning we will travel to Port Miyajimaguchi from where we will take a ferry to Miyajima. En route we will visit the beautiful Itsukushima Shrine. This remote area of Japan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its star attraction is the oft-photographed vermilion torii (shrine gate) of Itsukushima-jinja, which seems to float on the waves at high tide.

Following this we will board transfer to Hiroshima Airport for our flight home (Via Osaka or Tokyo). Our tour leader will take care of all our onward travel arrangements and wave us farewell. *(meals: breakfast) Flight details to be advised*
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 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, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as describe in the itinerary
- Professional Student Educational Adventures tour leader throughout trip & additional specialist guides
- Community project sourcing and arrangements
- Extensive destination specific risk management and assessments
- Meals (along with drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24 hours IN COUNTRY support from Student Educational Adventures staff
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings for students and parents
- All equipment including extensive medical supplies
- Parents information evening presentation
- Parental & student advice for vaccinations & equipment etc.
- Tips for local guides & drivers

Exclusions
- International flights to/from Japan #
- Some meals as described in the itinerary
- Japan Visa (if required)

# Please contact Student Educational Adventures for a competitive flight quote for flights to Japan from your country.

www.studenteducationaladventures.com

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