

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2026 CHERRY BLOSSOM SPECTACULAR TOUR OF JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

Start: Monday, 23 March 2026 from Tokyo
Finish: Sunday, 5 April 2026 at Tokyo
Duration: 14 days
Group size: 8 people
Cost estimate: AUD \$10,450 per person
Single supplement: AUD \$2,950 per person
Ref: GSS-26

TOUR OVERVIEW

Our most comprehensive cherry blossom tour, the 2026 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan* truly delivers the magic of Japan in springtime. Over 14 days, you follow the explosion of soft pink colour at all of Japan's most iconic cities including Tokyo, Hiroshima, Miyajima, Nara, Kyoto, Matsumoto and Mr Fuji area of Kawaguchiko before circling back to Tokyo. This Japan cherry blossom tour features many less-visited sites and unique experiences, made only possible by a Japan specialist, Journey to the East.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Mon 23/3/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>Welcome to Japan and your 2026 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan! On arrival* at one of Tokyo's international airports, you'll be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your central Tokyo hotel by airport shuttle or train.</p> <p>Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. You might like to step out and explore the local neighbourhoods around your hotel.</p> <p>Many of our guests arrive a day or so early before the tour starts. Please contact us if you'd like us to arrange an additional night's accommodation at the tour hotel.</p>	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin/Queen]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
2	Tue 24/3/2026	Guided tour of Tokyo suburbs	<p>After orientation with your guide, you begin your exploration of Tokyo. Japan's capital is an intriguing collection of small neighbourhoods each with their own distinct flavour. As you explore the city, you'll get beyond its surface to discover some of the local places where ordinary Tokyoites live and socialise.</p> <p>Today you take Tokyo's efficient subway and head to the lovely neighbourhood of Fukagawa. Despite being close to the business districts of central Tokyo, Fukagawa has a laid-back atmosphere, characteristic of Tokyo's traditional "shitamachi," the old heart of the city and still retains an unpretentious, down-to-earth feel. At this time of the year, the area bursts into pink air of cherry blossoms along the rivers. As well as taking a small boat ride along the river, you will visit Fukagawa Fudo-do temple for a fascinating fire and drum ritual.</p> <p>After a full day's exploration, we head back to our hotel and have a welcome dinner at a local Japanese izakaya pub.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin/Queen]
3	Wed 25/3/2026	Guided tour of Tokyo	<p>This morning you will have a guided tour of the central part of Tokyo including the 100-year-old Tokyo Station and Imperial Palace Plaza. This is the elitist part of Tokyo with headquarters of mega banks and trading houses, you will have lunch at a restaurant where lots of office workers go.</p> <p>The group breaks up in Ginza and the remainder of the day is free. Your guide will give you some orientation of the area for shopping and sightseeing. Tonight, why not try one of the thousands of restaurants in Ginza, near your hotel. Your guide will be more than happy to make suggestions.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin/Queen]
4	Thu 26/3/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Hiroshima/Miyajima	<p>You leave Tokyo this morning onboard a Shinkansen (bullet train) to visit the iconic sites of Hiroshima and Miyajima. You visit the Peace Memorial Park and the sobering but informative Peace Memorial Museum and contemplate the devastating impact of the world's first atomic bomb dropped in August 1945.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, you will cross to the island of Miyajima on a short ferry ride. You overnight on the island to enjoy the quiet after the day-trippers have gone and to capture an evocative photo of the famous torii gate at sunset. Dinner is a multi-course kaiseki banquet at a traditional ryokan – here you'll experience the elegant beauty of a tatami mat room and traditional ryokan hospitality.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Iwaso [Japanese style room with futon beddings]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
5	Fri 27/3/2026	Guided tour of Miyajima	<p>Enjoy a relaxed morning and the island's ambience. This morning your guide will take you on a tour of the UNESCO-listed Itsukushima Shrine and its famous Torii gate, originally constructed in 593. Mortals were not permitted to step foot on the sacred island and could only access the shrine to perform rituals by boat, hence the unusual pier-like structure of the shrine's main building.</p> <p>This afternoon, you have some free time. Perhaps hike up Mt Misen for its stunning views of the Seto Inland Sea, visit some Buddhist temples such as the intriguing Daisho-in, or simply enjoy some downtime in a waterfront cafe. Why not try Miyajima's famous oysters grilled at shop fronts all over the island.</p> <p>This evening you will hop back to mainland Hiroshima, and enjoy its specialty dish okonomiyaki, a savoury pancake cooked on a hot plate right in front of you for dinner. You may also like to visit the nearby Shukkei-en Garden, to admire its cherry blossoms beautifully illuminated at night.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Granvia Hiroshima [Superior Double/Twin]
6	Sat 28/3/2026	Guided tour of Himeji and transfer to Nara	<p>Back on the shinkansen, your next destination is Himeji and its magnificent World Heritage castle. Built-in 1580, Himeji Castle is a stunning example of castle architecture and one of the precious few original castles left in Japan. With an impressive network of defensive walls and turrets, its elegant white façade and cherry blossoms make it arguably Japan's most photogenic castle in spring.</p> <p>The ancient capital city of Nara and its surrounds is your next stop. You will base here for the next three nights exploring the historic sites at the peak of cherry blossom bloom.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Grand Mercure Nara Kashihara [Classic Twin Room]
7	Sun 29/3/2026	Guided tour of Nara	<p>Despite being an ancient capital, the present-day Nara countryside is very quiet and sparsely populated. Today you will tour around the rural countryside of Nara prefecture, stopping at some archeological sites, a preserved old merchant town and a local sake brewer. A great day to be away from tourist mass and immerse yourself in authentic culture and history.</p> <p>Back to the hotel, the dinner tonight is a local specialty hot pot dish at a restaurant in the area.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Grand Mercure Nara Kashihara [Classic Twin Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Mon 30/3/2026	Guided tour of Nara	<p>Today you explore the central part of Nara, Japan's first capital. Nara was the place where Buddhism first took hold in the 6th century, and its monumental Buddhist temples are a testament to its splendid past.</p> <p>The first stop is the UNESCO-listed Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest existing wooden structure. This majestic structure also houses one of the largest bronze Buddha figures in the world! The awe-inspiring statue, originally cast in 752, is flanked by two exquisitely sculpted guardian figures.</p> <p>You will have some free time this afternoon to continue your exploration of Nara City. You can visit a magnificent Isui-en Japanese garden, the religiously significant Kasuga Taisha shrine, or take a stroll around Wakakusayama Mountain.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Grand Mercure Nara Kashihara [Classic Twin Room]
9	Tue 31/3/2026	Guided tour of Kyoto	<p>This morning you will reach your next destination – Kyoto, the most iconic of cities. Originally made capital in 794, Kyoto remains the cultural heart of Japan and is home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites and a wealth of traditional craft shops, museums, galleries and outstanding restaurants.</p> <p>Stretch your legs with a walk along the scenic Kamo River, which runs through the city's heart near your hotel. You will visit select parks and gardens where cherry blossoms are in bloom.</p> <p>At the end of this afternoon, you'll see a performance of Miyako Odori, a colourful spring-time dance spectacular performed by Kyoto's geisha community.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Deluxe King]
10	Wed 1/4/2026	Guided tour of Arashiyama	<p>Today is spent exploring Arashiyama and Sagano in Kyoto's western mountains. UNESCO-listed Tenryu-ji is the key attraction with its superb stroll garden which artfully utilises the mountains behind as part of its design. You visit the historic Togetsu Bridge and its scenic river and stop for a traditional tofu lunch, a specialty of Kyoto. Arashimaya's bamboo forest is another popular site for its thick bamboo dappled in ethereal light. Escaping the other day-trippers, we'll walk on through quiet backstreets to Daikakuji Temple with its beautiful lake fringed by cherry blossom trees.</p> <p>Travelling back to central Kyoto, your group will visit Nishiki Market, the 'Kitchen of Kyoto' residents. The remainder of the day is free, and it is a great opportunity to visit one or more of Kyoto's icons such as Fushimi Inari shrine or Kiyomizu temple. Nijo Castle or Heian Jingu shrine are also recommended for cherry blossom viewing.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Cross Hotel Kyoto [Deluxe King]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Thu 2/4/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Matsumoto	<p>After spending several days in ancient capitals, the next part of your holiday is staged in central Honshu (the main island of Japan). On express trains, you journey to lovely Matsumoto in Nagano. Upon arrival you visit magnificent Matsumoto Castle, Japan's oldest wooden castle and one of the nation's five castles designated a national treasure. It is often contrasted with the white elegant design of Himeji Castle, the Matsumoto Castle has a symmetrical black appearance engendering the masculine beauty of the fortress. Still in impeccable condition, you explore its wooden interiors and climb to the top of its distinctive black-and-white turret.</p> <p>Dinner is at one of the city's acclaimed restaurants serving delicious Italian-fusion cuisine. Also this evening you will be treated to a local taiko (Japanese drum) performance and a chance to try beating the taiko yourself.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel [Deluxe Double/Twin]
12	Fri 3/4/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kawaguchiko (Mt Fuji)	<p>An express train trip takes you to Kawaguchiko, located in the lakes district at the foot of Mt Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain offering some breathtaking views of the majestic mountain.</p> <p>Firstly, you stop for a lunch of hearty Hoto noodles, the region's tasty specialty. Mt Fuji World Heritage Center tells us about the mountain's intriguing seismology and cultural significance. Itchiku Kubota Art Museum is a great museum to see superb examples of kimono art using the centuries-old shibori dyeing technique.</p> <p>Your ryokan (Japanese-style inn) tonight offers one last chance to enjoy Japan's sublime onsen culture. The communal open-air baths overlook the lake and offer spectacular views of Mt Fuji.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Fuji Ginkei [Japanese Western style room]
13	Sat 4/4/2026	Guided tour of Kawaguchiko and transfer to Tokyo	<p>This morning you take the Kachi Ropeway above Kawaguchiko's lake to catch different views of Mt Fuji. You will also visit Saiko Iyashi-no-Sato, a village made up of traditional farmhouses where you can have a glimpse of life in rural Japan.</p> <p>Back in the capital, you gather one more time for a farewell dinner at a modern restaurant with a great view of the city.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin/Queen]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
14	Sun 5/4/2026	Departure	<p>You check out of your hotel after breakfast and your 2026 Cherry Blossom Spectacular Tour of Japan concludes.</p> <p>You can take an airport express or limousine bus to your international departure airport in Tokyo. If you'd like to linger in Japan a little longer, we would be delighted to plan your personal post-tour extension to show you a different part of Japan. Please see our Model Extension Itineraries on the Private Tour page for inspiration.</p>	Breakfast	
		Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 13 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 10 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Airport transfer by public transport on departure ■ Pre-loaded transport IC card ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		
		Exclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal) ■ Tips and gratuities (not routinely expected in Japan) ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		