

## BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

### 2026 CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR OF JAPAN - CLASSIC ROUTE (COMFORT)

**Start:** Friday, 27 March 2026 from Tokyo

**Finish:** Wednesday, 8 April 2026 at Tokyo

**Duration:** 13 days

**Group size:** 8 people

**Cost estimate:** AUD \$13,730 per person

**Single supplement:** AUD \$4,520 per person

**Ref:** GSL-26

### TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2026 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan – Classic Route has been specifically designed as a once-in-a-lifetime trip to experience Japan's most iconic sights at the peak of cherry blossom time. With an extra small group size of a maximum of 8 guests per group, this fully escorted tour focuses on luxury accommodation, private transport and a relaxed travel pace. The tour includes Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Miyajima, as well as Hakone at the foot of Mt Fuji, before circling back to Tokyo. At each location, you make special excursions to some of Japan's less-visited corners and local neighbourhoods with some exclusive experiences to deliver a truly memorable Japan cherry blossom tour.

\*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Fri 27/3/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>Welcome to Japan and your 2026 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan - Classic Route. On arrival at one of Tokyo's international airports, you'll be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your Tokyo hotel by private transfer.</p> <p>Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. Stretch your legs if you like and explore the local neighbourhood around your hotel. You'll stay in Tokyo for three nights, which will help you ease into the trip and recover from any jet lag.</p> <p>Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. Please contact us if you'd like us to arrange an additional night's accommodation.</p>	No meals	Imperial Hotel Tokyo [Superior Double / Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
2	Sat 28/3/2026	Guided tour of Tokyo	<p>After orientation with your guide, you begin your exploration of Tokyo. A dazzling ultra-modern metropolis, Tokyo is also steeped in great history. On this tour, you experience both the traditional and contemporary sides of Japan's captivating capital.</p> <p>Firstly, you travel by private vehicle to the old neighbourhood of Asakusa and get a sense of days gone by. Asakusa is also home to Tokyo's oldest temple, venerable Sensoji with its iconic Kaminarimon Gate and Nakamise street stalls. After a traditional tempura lunch, you head across to the historic Ueno Park, one of Tokyo's most popular destinations for cherry blossom viewing.</p> <p>After a busy first day, you return to the hotel, and after some rest, gather for a relaxed welcome dinner of modern Japanese degustation cuisine.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Imperial Hotel Tokyo [Superior Double / Twin]
3	Sun 29/3/2026	Morning guided tour of Tokyo	<p>Tokyo has many faces and today you begin your exploration of Tokyo in the Marunouchi area, between the expansive Imperial Palace Plaza and the beautifully restored 100-year old Tokyo Station. Marunouchi means inside wall or moat, and it was originally the inner sanctum of Edo Castle, now the Emperor's Palace. It is the oldest and elitist office area in Japan, where all the top Japanese companies have headquarters, and is a great spot to see the blend of history and modernity. After wandering through Marunouchi with your guide, you will have lunch at a local restaurant rubbing shoulders with the Japanese office workers.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will have free time in Ginza, Japan's most famous ritzy commercial district, to witness the modern life of Tokyoites. Ginza's central boulevard is lined with its department stores, brand stores and specialty shops and a polished feel. Make sure you visit the basement food hall of one of its department stores – you'll be impressed by the range of beautifully presented food and confectionery.</p> <p>Tonight's dinner is at an Izakaya, a casual eatery in contrast to the night before.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Imperial Hotel Tokyo [Superior Double / Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Mon 30/3/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Hiroshima	<p>Leaving Tokyo behind, you settle into the comfortable first-class seats of Japan's gleaming shinkansen (bullet train) and journey to Hiroshima. After Hiroshima's soul food, okonomiyaki for lunch, you visit the Peace Memorial Park and its sobering but informative Museum and contemplate the devastating impact of the world's first atomic bomb dropped on the fateful day in August 1945.</p> <p>Late in the afternoon, you take a short ferry ride to the sacred island of Miyajima, one of Japan's top scenic spots. It's best known for the vermillion-red floating Torii gate, a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. You stay two nights on the island to fully enjoy Miyajima's island ambience, particularly after the day-trippers have gone. Early evening is a perfect time to take an evocative photo of the torii gate at sunset.</p> <p>Enjoy the stylish Japanese aesthetic of your hotel, and perhaps try the communal onsen bath for your first taste of Japan's renowned hot spring culture – a quintessential part of any Japanese experience!</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Miyajima Villa [Japanese style room with Western beds]
5	Tue 31/3/2026	Guided tour of Miyajima	<p>In the morning, before the tourists arrive, accompany your guide on a tour of UNESCO World Heritage-listed Itsukushima Shrine and its floating torii gate. The shrine was originally constructed in 593 when the island was designated a sacred island for the gods. Mortals were not permitted to step on the island and could only access it by boat, to perform rituals, hence the unusual pier-like structure of the shrine's main building.</p> <p>For the remainder of the day is your free time to enjoy the island in your own way. Perhaps catch the ropeway up to Mt Misen for breathtaking views across the Seto Inland Sea. Or visit the island's Buddhist temples and pavilions such as Daisho-in. Alternatively, simply enjoy some downtime relaxing at one of the island's cafes and watching the people (and the wild-protected deer!) as they wander by. Your guide will be happy to offer suggestions and assistance if needed.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Miyajima Villa [Japanese style room with Western beds]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
6	Wed 1/4/2026	Guided tour of Himeji and transfer to Kyoto	<p>It's back to Hiroshima this morning to board the Shinkansen heading for the exquisite ancient capital of Kyoto. On the way, you make a stop at Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built-in 1580, the fortress is a magnificent example of castle architecture and one of the precious few original castles left in Japan. Extensive in scale with an impressive network of defensive walls and moats, its elegant white façade and cherry blossoms make it arguably Japan's most photogenic castle in spring!</p> <p>You hop back on the Shinkansen for a short ride to Kyoto. Originally made capital in 794 before power was transferred to Tokyo some 1,000 years later, Kyoto remains the cultural heart of Japan. It is home to a staggering 17 UNESCO sites and a wealth of traditional craft shops, museums, galleries and outstanding restaurants.</p> <p>After checking into your hotel in the heart of Kyoto's Gion district, you have time to relax before you gather for dinner. You'll spend four nights here, allowing you to enjoy a slower pace mid-trip and get to know the local neighbourhood.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	The Celestine Kyoto Gion [Superior Twin/Double]
7	Thu 2/4/2026	Guided tour of Kyoto	<p>Your day starts with a visit to the magnificent Sanjusangendo, well-known for its 1001 statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. The 120-meter temple hall is Japan's longest wooden structure and the name Sanjusangendo (literally "33 intervals") derives from the number of intervals between the building's support columns, a traditional method of measuring the size of a building. In the centre of the main hall sits a large, wooden statue of a 1000-armed Kannon that is flanked on each side by 500 human-sized statues standing in ten rows. You then stroll around the lovely cherry tree-lined streets.</p> <p>Lunch is traditional yudofu cuisine, featuring the silky tofu for which Kyoto is famous.</p> <p>The day ends in a riot of gorgeous colour as Kyoto's geisha community performs the annual Miyako Odori – a spectacular dance accompanied by traditional music.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	The Celestine Kyoto Gion [Superior Twin/Double]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Fri 3/4/2026	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 in the area, with its superb stroll garden which artfully utilises the mountains behind as part of its design. It's also a popular stop for its cherry blossom trees. You visit the historic Togetsu Bridge and its scenic river and stop for a shojin-ryori lunch, traditional vegetarian fare eaten by Buddhist monks.</p> <p>Arashimaya's bamboo forest is another popular sight for its thick bamboo dappled in ethereal light. Escape the other day-trippers and enjoy a rickshaw ride through quiet backstreets and stop at Daikakuji Temple with its beautiful lake fringed by cherry trees.</p> <p>Back in central Kyoto, you have a free evening.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	The Celestine Kyoto Gion [Superior Twin/Double]
9	Sat 4/4/2026	Guided tour of Nara	<p>Today you step back even further into old Japan and make a day trip by private vehicle to timeless Nara, Japan's first capital. You start with a tour of the UNESCO-listed Todai-ji Temple, the world's largest existing wooden structure. If that's not enough, the majestic structure houses one of the largest bronze Buddha figures in the world! You walk on to Nara Park, an extensive parkland full of Buddhist sites and grazing deer, and stop by Nara's other star attraction, Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Also UNESCO-listed, this ancient shrine is celebrated for its grand approach lined with hundreds of stone lanterns and the gilded hanging lanterns decorating its main shrine building.</p> <p>Back in Kyoto, you have another evening free. Have a chat with your guide for recommendations.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	The Celestine Kyoto Gion [Superior Twin/Double]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
10	Sun 5/4/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Hakone	<p>You farewell Kyoto today and head north by Shinkansen to Hakone, a scenic hot springs resort area located in the mountains near Mt Fuji. Over the next two days, you stay at one of Hakone's premium boutique hot spring hotels. You'll experience Japan's onsen culture firsthand and understand why an onsen visit remains one of the top pastimes of the Japanese.</p> <p>You tour the general Hakone region by private vehicle, travelling through the Izu-Hakone National Park and, depending on the weather, catching glimpses of Mt Fuji up close. Hakone has some outstanding world-class museums and galleries and you'll visit the Hakone Open-Air Museum with its amazing outside sculptures.</p> <p>Lunch is at the delightful Fujiya Hotel, Japan's oldest Western-style hotel which has been welcoming guests from around the world since 1878.</p> <p>Your hotel will serve a kaiseki multi-course banquet of beautifully presented fresh local produce for dinner.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hakone Nanase [Semi Suite]
11	Mon 6/4/2026	Guided tour of Hakone	<p>Your exploration of Hakone continues with a visit to scenic Lake Ashi and a cruise onboard the "Viking" ship that plies the lake. You also visit the Narukawa Art Gallery for a collection of Japanese-style fine art. Hakone's latent geothermal activity can be experienced firsthand at Owakudani (or Great Boiling Valley), formed when a mountain collapsed some 3,000 years ago. Today great steams of sulphide can be seen from the boiling hot pools, making for a spectacular (albeit rather smelly) experience!</p> <p>You return to the hotel for dinner and another relaxing onsen bath.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hakone Nanase [Semi Suite]
12	Tue 7/4/2026	Transfer to Tokyo	<p>After a relaxing morning, you take the Shinkansen for the last time and travel back to Tokyo.</p> <p>The remainder of the day is free until dinner time, which is perfect for last-minute shopping or to cover the places you missed during your first visit to Tokyo.</p> <p>Tonight you gather one last time for a farewell dinner at a restaurant serving up a sophisticated modern Japanese cuisine.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Imperial Hotel Tokyo [Superior Double / Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
13	Wed 8/4/2026	Departure	<p>Check out of your hotel after breakfast and your 2026 Cherry Blossom Tour of Japan – Classic Route concludes.</p> <p>A private transfer will be arranged to take you to your existing 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 for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 12 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns with Western beds)</li> <li>■ All breakfasts, 7 lunches and 9 dinners</li> <li>■ Airport meet &amp; greet on arrival</li> <li>■ Hotel transfer by private transport on arrival</li> <li>■ All local transport (Green Class seat on shinkansen, train, bus and private minivans)</li> <li>■ Private airport transfer on departure</li> <li>■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed)</li> <li>■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in the itinerary</li> <li>■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person)</li> </ul>		
		Exclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated)</li> <li>■ Travel insurance</li> <li>■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal)</li> <li>■ Tips and gratuities (not routinely expected in Japan)</li> <li>■ Transport during free time</li> <li>■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.)</li> <li>■ Visa (if required)</li> </ul>		