



AUDLEY

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New Mill, our offices in the Windrush Valley on the edge of the Cotswolds



Daily Telegraph
**BEST SMALL
TOUR OPERATOR
2009**



We are proud to have received a number of awards over recent years. We have been the Daily Telegraph Ultra Travel Best Small Tour Operator winner and runner-up for the previous two years and, similarly, have been the winner or runner-up of the Guardian and Observer's Best Small Tour Operator award for the past four years as well as featuring in Wanderlust magazine's Top 10 Tour Operators for the past eight years.

These awards are widely recognised as being the most respected in the travel industry as they are professional surveys of the publications' readerships. With over 500 tour operators for you to choose from in the UK alone, we hope you find these awards are an additional reassurance of the quality of service you can expect from Audley.

* * *

AN INTRODUCTION TO 'JAPAN OLD & NEW'

TOUR

There are few places in the world as fascinatingly foreign as Japan. This is an unforgettable tour of contrasting images, in a country where ancient and modern, natural and man-made, merge like nowhere else on earth.

For convenience and comfort the group will travel by a mixture of private coach and Japan's ultra-modern transport system: speeding between cities on the famous 'shinkansen' bullet and limited express trains. Whilst the aim is to explore all sides of the paradox - from the towering skyscrapers of Tokyo to the secluded temples and shrines of Kyoto and Kamakura - the focus is on Japan's traditional past. You will experience the refined world of Kanazawa's gardens and museums, linger in the shadow of the great torii gate on picturesque Miyajima island and visit UNESCO World Heritage sites at Shirakawago and Nikko.

Accommodation will be mainly in excellent international style hotels, but there is also opportunity to try a more traditional style of accommodation along the way, including hot spring baths and Japanese cuisine.



Lake Ashi, with Mount Fuji behind, Hakone.

THE JAPAN TEAM AT AUDLEY

Every member of the team has lived, worked or travelled in Japan, each in a different region of the country and for varying lengths of time. We have pooled our collective knowledge, from the mountainous Alps, to the hot-springs of northern Honshu and the lush rice paddies of southern Kyushu, to create a trip that we think reflects the very best of Japan, along with drawing on experiences and feedback from past group tours and our excellent tour guides. Your initial enquiry will be handled by Marc, Kat, Alex, or Megan, who will then continue to be your main point of contact until you return from the tour. Please feel free to contact them at any time.



If you are interested in booking a place on the tour please contact our Japan team on 01993 838 210 or e-mail JapanGroupTour@audleytravel.com

CLIMATE

Due to the length of the archipelago, covering 20 degrees of latitude, Japan's climate varies greatly, ranging from Scandinavian in the north island of Hokkaido to sub-tropical in Okinawa in the far south. Essentially, Japan's four seasons resemble our own, but conditions are more pronounced, with a significantly colder and snowier winter and a much hotter summer. Autumn and spring are generally considered the best times to travel, with the wonderful cherry blossom or turning leaves adding a beautiful hue to the scenery.

TOUR HEALTH & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

To ensure that all participants get the most out of the tour, it is important that you are fully aware of the level of activity and fitness and medical health required to successfully complete this itinerary. Please read this dossier carefully prior to confirming your place on the tour, and having established the facts, it is your responsibility to contact us with any concerns regarding individual levels of fitness, health or ability. Please be aware that our tour leaders have the right to exclude customers from the tour if they feel they are not sufficiently fit, healthy or able to complete the tour without affecting its safety, comfort or smooth progress. If you would like to discuss any of these issues further please the Japan team on 01993 838 210 to discuss in more detail.

ACTIVITY LEVEL – LOW/MEDIUM

A medium level of fitness is required for this trip but you should be physically active. You should be aware and prepared for all or any of the following on this trip:

- **To carry your own luggage through airports and from the vehicles to hotels and vice versa. However, some portering is included as are luggage transfers when travelling by train.**
- **Walking up and down stairs to access train platforms.**
- **To join all day walking tours of cities, monuments and historic sites. (All of these are optional).**
- **To declare any food allergies or requirements prior to departure so that these can be incorporated into the itinerary where necessary.**

GROUP SIZE

The group size on this tour is a maximum of sixteen people, to ensure a more personal experience. Your main mode of transport will be a coach that seats 20-30, so there is plenty of space for everyone.

There is a minimum requirement of 10 passengers to run this tour, so the first 10 people to book will be done so on a provisional basis until minimum numbers are reached. Deposits for those first 10 people will be fully refundable should the tour not operate.

SINGLE TRAVELLERS

As a single traveller you have two options – you can choose to share a room with another single traveller on the tour and pay the standard tour price (this option will only be available if another single traveller of the same sex is also willing to share), or you can choose to guarantee the sole occupancy of your room, in which case a single supplement of £970 is payable.

TOUR GUIDE

You will be accompanied on your tour by one of our most experienced and highly regarded Japanese guides. Your guide will have lead tours for Audley clients in the past and will ensure that your tour runs smoothly, to time and will be on hand to solve any problems that may occur.

MEAL ARRANGEMENTS

Breakfast every day (x 16) is included at your hotel and dinner is included on five occasions, either at the hotel (where stated) or at a local restaurant. Lunch is included on one occasion. Your tour leader and guide will be able to make suggestions for dining where this is not included.

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Special dietary requirements should be highlighted by you on the booking form. However you must be aware that it is unrealistic to expect specialist diets to be catered for in some of the destinations we will be visiting. We will advise hotels and airlines of your request but we cannot guarantee their availability.

TIPPING POLICY

Tips for your guide are not included in the price of the trip. We suggest around £40-50 per couple for the whole trip. Tips for the drivers and porters have been included in the tour price.

WHAT TO PACK

Spring in Japan often presents a wide range in temperatures, from a chilly 5 or 6C in the mountains or early mornings, to a warm 20C or so in Hiroshima and Kyoto sometimes. Taking layers is essential, as is a waterproof and sturdy shoes. There can sometimes be lingering snow in areas such as Takayama, so a scarf and gloves by also be useful, although hopefully not necessary.

MAPS OF THE REGION



DAY BY DAY SUMMARY OF TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

| DAY | DATE | ITINERARY IN BRIEF | ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Friday 19 October 2012 | Fly overnight with British Airways, arriving the following morning. | On-board the aircraft |
| 2 | Saturday 20 October 2012 | At Narita airport you are met by your guide, who will be with you for the duration of the trip. Once the full group has assembled, we'll transfer to Tokyo by airport limousine bus. Tonight the group meets for a relaxed, informal welcome dinner to get to know the tour guide and fellow travellers. (D) | Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo 1 x Superior Room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 3 | Sunday 21 October 2012 | Today we explore some of the main sights of Tokyo, including Meiji-jingu shrine, Asakusa and Tokyo Tower. (B) | Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo Superior Room Breakfast is included |
| 4 | Monday 22 October 2012 | A couple of hours` drive away from Tokyo is the seaside town of Kamakura, celebrated for its ancient bronze Great Buddha. We continue on to Hakone National Park in the afternoon and the small village of Miyanoshita. (B) | Fujiya Hotel, Miyanoshita, Hakone 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 5 | Tuesday 23 October 2012 | Hakone is best explored using a variety of public transportation, including a cable car, funicular railway and local bus. The loop around the park is scenic and provides several Mt Fuji viewing spots along the way, weather permitting. We also pay a visit to the excellent Open Air Museum, which houses sculptures by Henry Moore and Picasso, amongst others. (B,D) | Fujiya Hotel, Miyanoshita, Hakone 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast and dinner are included |
| 6 | Wednesday 24 October 2012 | This morning we transfer by private coach through the Japan Alps, stopping to pay a brief visit to Matsumoto, home to Japan`s oldest five tier castle. We continue on to the small city of Takayama. (B) | Hotel Associa, Takayama 1 x Standard twin for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 7 | Thursday 25 October 2012 | We explore Takayama on foot today, including the Sanmachi merchant area and Festival Float Museum. (B) | Hotel Associa, Takayama 1 x Standard twin for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 8 | Friday 26 October 2012 | Between Takayama and today`s destination, Kanazawa, lies the secluded village of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site home to a unique, traditional building style known as gassho-zukuri. You have the opportunity to try your hand at Japanese cookery today as we will be making soba buckwheat noodles for lunch. We continue on to Kanazawa in the afternoon. (B,L) | Excel Tokyu Hotel, Kanazawa 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |

| DAY | DATE | ITINERARY IN BRIEF | ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 9 | Saturday 27 October 2012 | The first stop today is Kanazawa`s most celebrated attraction, the Kenroku-en garden, rated as one of the three finest stroll gardens in Japan. The afternoon is spent exploring some more of this convivial city. (B) | Excel Tokyu Hotel, Kanazawa 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 10 | Sunday 28 October 2012 | We take the express and bullet trains from Kanazawa to Hiroshima. On arrival we visit the moving Peace Park and Memorial Museum on foot. (B) | ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel, Hiroshima 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 11 | Monday 29 October 2012 | From Hiroshima it is a scenic ferry ride across to Miyajima Island. We will be spending the night in a Japanese style hotel, with traditional "banquet" style cuisine served in the evening. This is a great opportunity to experience traditional Japanese hospitality. The island is also very serene in the evening and pleasant to stroll round in your "yukata" - cotton Japanese robe - after dinner. (B,D) | Miyarikyu Hotel, Miyajima Island 1 x Japanese Ocean View room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast and dinner are included |
| 12 | Tuesday 30 October 2012 | Using the ferry, local train and bullet train, we transfer to Kyoto today. For centuries Kyoto was the cultural heart of Japan and it was here that many of the finest aspects of the culture developed and flourished: the arts and crafts; the beautiful temples, palaces and gardens; and, perhaps most famously, the refined world of the geisha. The afternoon is at leisure. (B) | Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 13 | Wednesday 31 October 2012 | Enjoy a full day tour to soak up the unique atmosphere of the city. (B) | Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 14 | Thursday 01 November 2012 | This morning we visit nearby Nara, former capital of Japan. We visit Todaiji temple, the largest wooden structure in Japan. In the afternoon we return to Kyoto to take part in a calligraphy and origami lesson with the Women`s Association of Kyoto. Tonight we dine at a local restaurant, which includes a dance performance by a maiko, a trainee geisha. (B,D) | Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto 1 x Standard room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast is included |
| 15 | Friday 02 November 2012 | We transfer back to Tokyo by high-speed bullet train and the afternoon is at leisure. Tonight`s farewell dinner is at Gonpachi, a lively restaurant in the bustling Ginza area of the city. (B,D) | Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo 1 x Superior room for 2 (Twin) - Breakfast and dinner are included |
| 16 | Saturday 03 November 2012 | Transfer by shared limousine bus to Narita airport, for the return flight back to the UK. (B) | |



Nijo Castle, Kyoto

TOUR PRICE

Itinerary reference: Japan Old & New 19 October 2012. *Please quote this on any correspondence*

| | |
|---|--------|
| Arrangements as specified per person | £5,500 |
| Single supplement | £970 |
| Flight upgrades are available on request | |
| Per person deposit required to confirm these arrangements | £795 |

The deposit required is detailed above and relates to the itinerary detailed in this quotation. In most cases the deposit is 15% of the total cost or £200 per person (whichever is the greater), however in some instances a larger deposit is required in order to secure particular services. Please refer to the Important Information booklet and booking form for further details on our Terms and Conditions.

AUDLEY PRICE POLICY

We are confident that we offer excellent value for money and constantly monitor our prices to make sure we remain competitive. We may not be the cheapest but our specialist knowledge and close working relationships with our experienced partners overseas ensures we provide a high level of service without charging an exorbitant price. If another tour operator quotes what appears to be a lower price then we are happy to review our price with you, however in our experience when we examine alternative quotations we invariably find differences in the arrangements. These may be subtle or more fundamental but the impact these can have on your enjoyment is considerable. If you are able to provide a copy of the other proposal (with the name of the tour operator omitted if you prefer) we will compare the arrangements and forward a detailed reply to you.

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- Meals are not normally included unless otherwise stated within your Itinerary.
- Local airport departure taxes - payable locally on each departure.
- Optional excess reduction on car hire, where applicable.
- Locally payable car hire related charges.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, drinks, etc.
- Tips for your guide and driver (discretionary).
- Any camera or video fees at any sites.
- Entrance fees and other costs when on 'free time'
- Future Fuel Surcharges.
- Travel Insurance

CARBON OFFSETTING

Optional Carbon Offsetting for your flights per person £15

Please let your specialist know if you would like to carbon offset your flights. We work in partnership with Friends of Conservation and all carbon offsetting payments are donated through them. For more information on their projects please see www.audleytravel.com/offset. The suggested amounts are in line with the DEFRA's current guidelines for the cost per tonne of carbon.

Unfortunately we are not able to claim Gift Aid on these contributions. If you would like to ensure that Gift Aid is included please donate directly at <http://www.foc-uk.com/calculate.asp?link=audley>

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are adequately insured, protecting against unforeseen circumstances that could otherwise spoil your travels. Cover should include medical expenses and repatriation in the event of accident or illness. In addition, we strongly recommend that you have cover for personal belongings, delay at your outward or homeward point of departure, personal liability, overseas legal expenses and cancellation. If you are undertaking any sports or adventurous activities, including trekking, on your trip you should also make sure that your policy covers these. Please also ensure you read the policy conditions and exclusions.

The type of trips we create and the requirements of Audley clients vary greatly. We have therefore listed on our General Information page (at the back of this dossier) a number of providers who offer policies which may suit these varying requirements. You can find a more comprehensive list, including links to the providers' websites, at www.audleytravel.com/insurance. Other providers and policies are also available. We are unable to provide you with more detailed information and you should contact the provider concerned directly for this.

Please note, this is general information only. We are not providing any specific advice on travel insurance or recommending any particular policy or insurer.

HOW TO BOOK

If you are happy with the arrangements outlined within this itinerary and would like to book, please forward your completed booking form and the deposit specified above. If you would like to revise the itinerary, feel free to contact me and I can prepare another version which will hopefully match your requirements. The deposit can be paid by cheque, bank transfer or credit / debit card. Please make cheques payable to Audley Travel.

On occasions, we may be asked by suppliers to make payment to them earlier than normal. Such requests may, for example, be made in order to secure flights, accommodation and other services during periods of peak demand. Whilst suppliers may have no contractual right to make such requests, failure to comply with them may result in the loss of confirmed arrangements. Where this situation arises, we reserve the right to ask you to make payment of the requested sum within a stipulated period and prior to balance due date. We will of course endeavour to avoid doing so if we can. Any such part payment will be treated as part of your deposit for the purposes of our terms and conditions.

Please note if you confirm your booking within 60 days of your departure date full payment is required at the time of booking.

PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD

Please note that we do not charge a fee on deposit payments by credit card, except when a deposit is more than 15%. In this situation a charge will apply. Credit card fees are detailed within the enclosed Important Information booklet and booking form. We charge a credit card fee due to the high fees charged to tour operators by the credit card companies. We have chosen to make this transparent rather than including it within the trip price. You may therefore wish to pay the balance by bank transfer, debit card or personal cheque.

WHY TRAVEL WITH US?

PERSONAL SERVICE

We are committed to offering you a very personal service, with all your arrangements being handled by one country specialist. They will remain your one point of contact and will take responsibility for the smooth operation of your trip. They are supported by a professional administration and management team.

REPUTATION & QUALITY

Well over 80% of our clients have travelled with us in the past or have had Audley recommended to them. Repeat business and recommendations are an essential part of our business. When you book with us you are assured of quality arrangements if only for the fact that we simply cannot afford to risk our excellent reputation.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE

In the vast majority of cases we handle all our clients' arrangements. Your visas will be processed well in advance of travel and air tickets are typically issued 2-3 weeks before travel. We are used to dealing with problems from minor flight time alterations to more fundamental changes. When problems occur we will rapidly rearrange your itinerary to make best use of your time given the changed circumstances, not simply cancel part of your trip or leave you sitting in an airport waiting for hours for a rescheduled flight. Importantly, in these situations we will do everything possible to minimise any extra costs involved – in the vast majority of cases no extra charges will be made.

QUALITY LOCAL REPRESENTATION

We take a good deal of care when choosing our local agents, taking into account their quality of service and vehicles. We have built up many longstanding relationships with these agents, ensuring that they deliver the level of service demanded by Audley clients. Our local guides and drivers, where appropriate, are the people you will meet. In many cases we know them personally, in all cases we ensure that they are of the highest calibre. They are there to do much more than show you specific sights and provide factual information. They will be able to tell you about local life, culture, cuisines and customs; and, where applicable, act as translator. In certain parts of the world a specialist guide is more appropriate, for example, a wildlife expert.

EXPERIENCE & ACCURACY

From the moment you contact us, we are here to answer any questions about the specific arrangements or more general queries you may have about the region. We have spent many years leading group tours, researching new trips and travelling privately. The benefit of this experience is yours throughout. When we do not know the answer to a question we will endeavour to find out and get back to you as soon as possible.

HONESTY

The travel industry generally has a bad reputation when it comes to the provision of accurate and clear advice. Our specialisation and extensive on the ground experience means that advice given to you over the telephone and in our pre-departure literature is as up-to-date, accurate and relevant as it can be.

DETAILED ITINERARIES

We work hard to prevent problems occurring in destinations that may be very difficult to deal with and make a point of highlighting any irritations you could experience en-route such as flight delays. Our itineraries are designed to be comprehensive and clear whilst the level of detail within this itinerary is intended to allow you to make an informed choice about the journey and to have a clear understanding of what is and is not included in the price.

MISHAPS EN-ROUTE

If a problem does occur while you are travelling you can contact us on our 24 hour number. We will do everything in our power to rectify the problem immediately rather than allow it to spoil your trip.

LEGAL LIABILITY

We are a UK company and hence must fully comply with UK law. When booking with us you can rest assured that your arrangements are carefully planned as we have a reputation to maintain and are legally liable for any omissions or negligent acts.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

As an extension of the passion we have for the countries we specialise in, we have a firm commitment to the principles of Responsible Travel. We have been awarded AITO Responsible Travel 5 star status (the highest achievable) and continue to work with AITO and a wide variety of other bodies to improve our policy. We try to include a wide range of RT initiatives in our itineraries, from home stays and craft shops to locally owned hotels and eco-lodges, to ensure the sustainability of tourism in the destinations we operate in. For more details, please refer to our website, where you will find details of our RT policy and also our Travellers' Code. If you are particularly interested in these issues and wish to incorporate them into your itinerary, please do not hesitate to contact your country specialist: laura.morris@audleytravel.com



CHARITY SUPPORT

Audley has been supporting carbon reduction projects through Friends of Conservation since 2005 and in addition to this each individual department also supports a charity of their choice with a yearly financial donation. This charity is one that is close to their hearts and the team often chooses to fundraise to add to this amount. Please ask your specialist if you would like to find out more as in most instances they will have visited the charity themselves, or one of their colleagues will have.

THE CHRISTINA NOBLE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION AND AUDLEY'S CONTRIBUTION

The Christina Noble Children's Foundation (CNCF) is dedicated to helping children in need with education, medical care, social opportunities and job placement. Located in the country's capital, the foundation conducts outreach work in and around Ulaan Bataar offering housing for poor and single parent families as well as medical care, shelter and schooling for street children. In 1997 the foundation established a permanent centre here with the aim of creating a stable home for as many orphaned children as possible. Today the charity's 'Sunshine Ger Village', boasts a number of residential gers (the traditional felt tent of the Mongolian people) and other facilities which serve as a stable home for 60 children and young adults ranging in age from 2 to 24 years old. Each residential ger is staffed by an adopted ger mother, often a single parent herself, who creates a loving home for all of the children within her care. At school age the children are enrolled alongside their peers at the local district school: learning within the community and gaining vital qualifications for later adult life. Children below school age attend the Foundation's kindergarten, constructed in 2002 on land adjacent to the ger village. The kindergarten also serves the wider community and provides invaluable pre-school education to children of local families.



Children from the ger sunshine village going to school

OUR CONTRIBUTION

As part of their outreach work in the capital CNCF administer the 'Give a Ger' fund, an emergency fund established to provide families in danger of becoming homeless with a secure and comfortable place to live. This has proved an essential lifeline for many in a country which is renowned for its particularly harsh winters where temperatures drop as low as -40°C , conditions which often drive whole families beneath the city's streets as they find refuge in central heating pipes and vents. In 2008 our department made a £500 donation to the charity which bought a ger for a nomadic family who had been living in what can only be described as a primitive hut in the heart of the city's slum district.

In 2009 we decided to strengthen our support for the charity by committing our annual donation to sponsor a child through the remainder of his secondary education. Our fundraising efforts on behalf of the foundation continued with a staff barbeque funding fuel and winter provisions for the family.

It is exciting to be able to see how our money will be put into positive action. We are looking forward to inviting clients who travel with Audley to visit the gers and in particular the Sunshine Ger Village and meet those children helped by CNCF.

If you would like further information please speak to your specialist or visit www.cncf.org



Zen garden, Kyoto

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

**Friday, 19
October 2012**

LONDON TO TOKYO

British Airways flight - Flight No: TBC - Dep: TBC - Arr: TBC - (next day); Class: Economy class; Non-stop flight;

Please note that flight times have not yet been confirmed as flight schedules for 2012 have not yet been released.

**Saturday, 20
October 2012**

Japan Introduction

In the archetypal image of the sleek bullet train gliding past snow-capped Mount Fuji, the magic of Japan is encapsulated in one freeze frame: natural and modern beauty merging in harmony. Japan's four main islands contain a wealth of variety and spectacle, from the thronging cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Hiroshima to the provincial spa towns, neatly-tended farming regions and rugged wilderness beyond. Delve into Japan's rich cultural heritage in Kyoto and Takayama to witness traditional ceremonies, dress and theatre, and take a glimpse into the closed world of the Geisha. Enjoy, too, the delectable cuisine, taking time to sample the numerous local and seasonal delicacies to be found in every city and town. The appeal of Japan encompasses all tastes and ages, whether your interest lies in embracing modern pop-culture, discovering ancient spirituality in secluded Buddhist retreats or communing with nature in steamy jungles or high mountain peaks. Relax on star-sand beaches in southerly Okinawa or whale-watch in wintry Hokkaido, the scope of experience is truly immense. In Japan a striking backdrop of mountain scenery and crystal lakes, neon-lit skyscrapers and landscaped gardens, steaming volcanoes and traditional architecture forms a magical world that will amaze you each step of your journey.

Tokyo Introduction

Tokyo is a city that is hard to introduce. If you speak to people who have either lived in or visited the city, each person will have a very different impression from the others. Some will use words like 'amazing' and 'fantastic', while others will be more cautious, warning of crowded trains and perpetual hustle and bustle. However all will share one thing in common, the experience of seeing one of the world's most diverse and exciting cities, where the ultra-modern vies for attention with the historical past, Michelin starred restaurants sit alongside back-street noodle bars and smoky temples are nestled between glittering skyscrapers. Tokyo is a city of juxtaposition and contradiction and one certainly not to be missed.

WELCOME MEETING AT AIRPORT AND TRANSFER TO TOKYO


with your guide

After passing through immigration and claiming your baggage, make your way to the Arrivals Hall to be met by your guide. They will be carrying a sign clearly indicating the name Audley Travel. The transfer to Tokyo will be by shared limousine bus and is a journey of around two hours. Please note there will be non-Audley passengers on this coach.

INTRODUCTORY EVENING MEAL

group dinner

Held at a local restaurant or the hotel restaurant, this welcome dinner is an opportunity to get to know your fellow travellers and tour leader a little better.

 Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo
Breakfast is included

**Sunday, 21
October 2012**

TOKYO CITY TOUR


group excursion by private vehicle with your local guide

Japan's modern capital has no single central point, rather it is an amalgamation of many individual districts, each with its own unique character and highlights.

Our tour today takes in the best of Tokyo, combining both the modern and the ancient attractions. We begin our day with a visit to Meiji-jingu shrine, in Yoyogi Park. The shrine was first built in 1920 in memory of Emperor Meiji, who reigned until 1912. Emperor Meiji's rule was one of the most important in Japanese history and saw political, social, and industrial revolution turn Japan into one of the great world powers. Meiji also opened up the country to international trade and commerce. A detailed account of the State Funeral in the New York Times concluded with the observation: "The contrast between that which preceded the funeral car and that which followed it was striking indeed. Before it went old Japan; after it came new Japan". Meiji shrine is therefore a poignant starting point for our Old & New tour of Tokyo. We continue from here to Harajuku, the youth-dominated, shopping Mecca of the city. From here we take the coach to the Imperial Palace Gardens, stopping here briefly and then on Sensoji temple in Asakusa, one of Tokyo's most important sights. The temple is in quiet contrast to the hustle of the city surrounding it, although it does attract many visitors both domestic and from abroad. After lunch we continue on to the Hinode Pier to cruise along the bay to Odaiba, a man-made island across Tokyo Bay, offering some great scenery of the cityscape. Returning to the mainland by driverless mono-rail train, the tour makes its way to Roppongi Hills. There are wonderful night views from the top of the skyscraper complex here, a fitting end to our exploration of the city.



Sensoji Temple

 **Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo**
Breakfast is included

**Monday, 22
October 2012**

TOKYO TO HAKONE, VIA KAMAKURA

transfer by private coach accompanied by your guide

This morning we drive on from Tokyo by private coach to the nearby town of Kamakura. Just an hour south of Tokyo, this pretty seaside town was briefly the seat of the feudal government in the 12th Century, and though its importance soon faded, the remnants of its former glory are still visible in the Great Bronze Buddha and the many interesting temples and shrines that are dotted throughout town. The great image of Buddha is the principal attraction for all visitors to Kamakura, and a photographer's delight. Situated in the precincts of Kotokuin Temple, the Daibutsu is a bronze statue depicting Buddha in a seated meditative pose. It measures 11.4m in height. Leaving the town in the afternoon we drive on to our final destination, our hotel in the heart of the Hakone countryside, stopping in briefly at the Honma marquetry Museum at Odawara.

Hakone Introduction

The Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park spreads over a large region to the south of Tokyo, encompassing the Izu Peninsula, Hakone, Mt Fuji and Fuji Five Lakes. Commonly referred to as simply the Hakone National Park, "Hakone" is the gateway to a scenic sightseeing loop, best visited utilising the good value Hakone Free Pass ticket. On a clear day, there are several Fuji viewing spots in the park, serviced by various modes of public transportation. The park encompasses several main areas; Odawara, Hakone Yumoto, Miyanoshita, Gora, Sengokuhara, Moto Hakone and Hakone Machi with accommodation spread around all these areas.

 **Fujiya Hotel, Miyanoshita, Hakone**
Breakfast is included

**Tuesday, 23
October 2012**

EXPLORING HAKONE

group excursion using public transport with your guide

We will be using the Hakone Free pass ticket during our sightseeing trip around the park, which allows unlimited access to the local scenic train line, the bus network, a funicular train up to the volcanic rim, which leads on to a gondola cable car and a bus journey through the scenic mountains. There is also a lake crossing at Lake Ashinoko upon a quirky and kitsch replica pirate ship! We end the day at the excellent Open Air Sculpture Museum in Chokokunomori.



Lake Ashi, Hakone

Mt Fuji can be spotted from various points around the park, weather permitting. We begin our full circuit of the park by heading off on the Tozan railway to the small village of Gora at the foot of the mountain. From Gora we take the funicular railway up Mt Kami. Alighting here at Owakudani "Hell Valley" we walk through the bubbling sulphur vents and stop to try one of the famous black eggs, cooked in the heat of the natural thermal activity. The route continues by cable-car, providing some lovely views across Lake Ashi. Disembarking the cable-car we board the boat across Lake Ashi to Moto-Hakone, the main small town in the region, to see the Edo era checkpoint and ancient cedar avenue. We then take the bus on to the excellent Open Air Sculpture museum at the village of Chokokunomori. The museum houses sculptures by Henry Moore, Picasso, Rodin and Miro and was the first open air museum in Japan, opening in 1969. The museum has over 100 sculptures (often in rotation) and an indoor collection as well.

 **Fujiya Hotel, Miyanoshita, Hakone**
Breakfast and dinner are included

**Wednesday, 24
October 2012**

HAKONE TO TAKAYAMA, VIA MATSUMOTO

transfer by private coach accompanied by your guide

This morning we drive by private coach through the Japan Alps into mountainous Nagano Prefecture, host to the 1998 Winter Olympics. We pay a brief visit to Matsumoto, gateway to the Japanese Alps and home to Japan's oldest five tier castle, built in 1593, before continuing on to the Alps town of Takayama. Today is the longest transfer of the tour, taking around 8 to 9 hours in total, including stops.

Takayama Introduction

Nestled in the Japanese Alps, Takayama is only a small city, but of significant historic importance in the Hida district. The built up area around the station belies the hidden charm of the streets to the east of Miwagawa river, which give way to the Sanmachi District, a warren of traditional shops, museums, galleries and sake breweries, all retaining their character in a country that otherwise has embraced the modern age. The oldest buildings that remain are some storehouses (kura in Japanese) built in the 17th century. Most of the buildings in the Sanmachi District are from the late 19th century, although they retain the charm of times gone by. That said, Takayama has lost some of its charm over the past 20 years or so but the local architecture, ebullient atmosphere and culinary specialties keep visitors coming back year after year. Takayama also has an extensive wooded park and numerous shrines in the Teramachi district, which has often led to comparisons with Kyoto.

 **Hotel Associa, Takayama**
Breakfast is included

**Thursday, 25
October 2012**

EXPLORING TAKAYAMA

group excursion with your local guide

The morning is spent strolling among the atmospheric merchant houses and markets of the Sanmachi district. Twice a year, Takayama plays host to a busy festival, with a procession of "yatai" festival floats through the centre of the town over two consecutive evenings. We will be able to see some of these fascinating floats up close at the Festival Float Museum and learn a little more about the history of the festival. We also visit the Governor's House and enjoy a short performance at the Marionette Museum. The afternoon is free for you to further explore the old streets of this pretty town.



Takayama restaurant

 **Hotel Associa, Takayama**
Breakfast is included

**Friday, 26
October 2012**

TAKAYAMA TO KANAZAWA VIA SHIRAKAWAGO

transfer by private coach accompanied by your guide

Between Takayama and our destination, Kanazawa, lies the secluded village of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to a unique, traditional building style known as Gassho-zukuri. We also stop in another of the Shokawa valley villages, where we will be making our own soba noodles for lunch. After passing through the mountains we arrive into Kanazawa.

For most of their history, the villages in this region have lain hidden in the deep, snowbound valleys of the northern Alps, under the shadow of sacred Mt Hakusan. The traditional style of housing, the Gassho-zukuri, designed with steep, thatched roofs to withstand the weight of snow, has survived in this area long after it has disappeared from other, more accessible, areas. The region was opened up in the 1960's when the river upstream from the villages was dammed, and the subsequent highway into the mountains constructed. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995, and consequently the number of visitors, and gift shops, has increased dramatically. That said, the village of Shirakawago is still a fascinating remnant of an older Japan.


The journey passes through parts of the Hida Tunnel, which opened in summer 2008. This tunnel is a feat of Japanese engineering and the second longest tunnel in the country.

Kanazawa Introduction

From the 15th century onwards, thanks to the wealth brought through local rice production and trade, Kanazawa has been one of Japan's foremost cultural centres. Located at the south-western base of the Noto Peninsula, just inland from the Sea of Japan, Kanazawa is the prefectural capital and quite a large, sprawling town. There are a number of interesting cultural sites that can be reached easily using the excellent bus service. These include the much-celebrated Kenroku-en Garden, ranked together with those in Mito and Okayama as the three best in Japan, the Nagamachi Samurai District, a silk-dyeing centre, the fascinating Myoryuji 'Ninja' temple and the Gold Leaf Museum amongst others. The 21st Century Art Museum has been completed and makes a very well worthwhile detour for those wishing to view contemporary art.



Higashi-chaya district, Kanazawa

 **Excel Tokyu Hotel, Kanazawa**
Breakfast is included

**Saturday, 27
October 2012**


KENROKU-EN AND KANAZAWA CITY TOUR

group excursion with your guide

The first stop today, and the most important on any visit to Kanazawa, is the town's most celebrated draw, the serene Kenroku-en garden. The town is also renowned for its craftwork and we'll explore the shops and traditional stores, as well as some of Kanazawa's other attractions during the remainder of the day.

Kanazawa's number one attraction, ranked by the Japanese as one of the top three gardens in Japan, is a must-see for any visitor to Kanazawa. It is located right in the middle of town, within easy walking distance of the main shopping district and many of the other tourist sites of interest. The name Kenroku-en refers to the six attributes traditionally considered vital in the creation of the perfect garden, all of which are said to exist here. One of these, seclusion, may seem a little hard to come by at certain times of year but with a bit of luck we will be able to time our visit to enjoy in peace the beautiful combination of ponds, streams, old trees and teahouses that have made the garden justifiably famous. On one edge of the garden is the Seisonkaku Villa, formerly the residence of the local feudal lord's mother, and now open to the public as a museum.

After lunch there will be time to stroll around the nearby Nagamachi samurai district with your guide.

 **Excel Tokyu Hotel, Kanazawa**
Breakfast is included

**Sunday, 28
October 2012**

KANAZAWA TO HIROSHIMA BY TRAIN

shared transfer with your guide

Taking the train from Kanazawa to Osaka, we connect with the famous shinkansen bullet train and head westwards, skirting the Inland Sea, to Hiroshima, the city that has risen from the ashes of the first atomic bomb. On arrival we transfer to the hotel and enjoy an afternoon exploring the Peace Park and its museum. Total journey time will be around four hours.

LUGGAGE TRANSFER SERVICE INFORMATION

pre-arranged and pre-paid

The Takkyu-bin service provides a fast and simple postal service for you to send on your luggage to your next destination. This is the ideal way to travel unencumbered on Japan's excellent transport service. Your main cases will be waiting for you in **Kyoto**, so please take sufficient clothing and other essentials for the next two nights.

Hiroshima Introduction

Hiroshima is a city which has risen from the ashes since the horrific events of August 1945 and although these events are justifiably and sensitively commemorated, the city is now one with an energetic and cosmopolitan feel. The wide tree lined avenues, castle (reconstructed), Shukkei-en gardens and of course the moving Peace Park and Memorial Museum ensure that the visitor has plenty to see and do over a couple of days here.



Atomic bomb dome, Hiroshima

HIROSHIMA CITY TOUR

group excursion on foot with your guide

Our sightseeing will focus on the powerful Peace Park and Memorial Museum, which commemorate and explain the tragic events of 6th August 1945. The A-Bomb Dome is one of the most prominent reminders of the atrocity and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. From the A-Bomb Dome we cross into Heiwa-koen (Peace Park), which is dotted with various memorials, including the Children's Peace Memorial which was inspired by a young leukaemia sufferer's wish to fold 1000 origami crane before she died. Sadly her wish was not fulfilled, but her classmates folded the rest and sparked a nationwide campaign. Strings of cranes are kept at the memorial to this day and regularly added to it. We also pay a visit to the museum, which explains more about the history of nuclear warfare and goes into more detail about 6th August 1945.

 **ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel, Hiroshima**
Breakfast is included

**Monday, 29
October 2012**

HIROSHIMA TO MIYAJIMA BY BOAT

shared transfer accompanied by your guide

We take a boat from Hiroshima's Peace Park, along the river and into the Inland Sea to cross over to Miyajima Island. The journey will take around an hour in total.

Miyajima Island Introduction

Miyajima, or Itsuku-shima as it was formally known, has been sacred to the Japanese since the inception of the first shrine on the island over fifteen hundred years ago. The present incarnation of the Itsukushima-jinja shrine is one of the island's greatest attractions, and the "floating" red torii gate that stands in the shallow waters of the bay when the tide is in, remains one of the most photographed views in Japan. The small town has a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere, particularly in the evenings and early mornings once the day-trippers have returned to the mainland. There are several other smaller temples and shrines dotted around the island that are well worth a visit and Mt Misen (530m) offers great views from its summit.

EXPLORING MIYAJIMA ISLAND

group excursion on foot with your guide

We begin our sightseeing with a visit to the shoreline to see the 'torii' gate- at its most photogenic when the tide is high but also interesting when the waters have receded and you can walk up to the huge structure and admire it close up. After some time here we explore some smaller temples dotted about the island before walking up and through to Momiji-dani valley. Please note the valley becomes slightly hilly in parts. Towards the top of the valley we reach the cable car station for the ascent up to Mt Misen (a two-stage cable car). On a clear day the views from the top are spectacular.

 **Miyarikyu Hotel, Miyajima Island**
Breakfast and dinner are included

**Tuesday, 30
October 2012**

MIYAJIMA TO KYOTO VIA HIROSHIMA BY FERRY AND TRAIN

shared transfer with your guide

We return to Miyajima-guchi station by ferry from the island and then take a local train to Hiroshima station. Here, we board the high speed Nozomi bullet train to Kyoto, covering the 380km distance in just over an hour and half. At Kyoto station we have a short time to wander around the building itself - a striking modern design in stark contrast to the ancient temples and shrines elsewhere in the city, before taking taxis to our hotel in the Higashiyama area.

Kyoto Introduction

Kyoto was the capital of Japan for over one thousand years and remains the most culturally important city in Japan. The city houses about 1,700 Buddhist temples and 300 Shinto shrines as well as palaces, castles, canals and gardens. Here, modern buildings stand side by side with buildings steeped in history. Walking down narrow alleyways you can still see Japan of yesteryear with women wearing kimono and tatami mats being hand-made. Kyoto is one of the most entertaining cities in the world with some of the best restaurants in Japan, excellent shopping and a host of cultural shows that serve to amuse and inform. No visit to Japan is really complete without seeing Kyoto.



Temple at dusk, Kyoto


 **Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto**
Breakfast is included

**Wednesday, 31
October 2012**

KYOTO CITY TOUR

group excursion by private vehicle with your guide

Today enjoy a fascinating introduction to the refined delights of Kyoto. We visit some of the city's most celebrated sights, including Kinkakuji temple, Nijo Castle and the iconic Ryoanji Zen garden. The precise itinerary may vary somewhat, depending on conditions on the day, and any local markets or events that may be worth a diversion. Kinkakuji temple, otherwise known as the Golden Pavilion, is one of the most famous landmarks in the city and it can get very crowded in the spring and autumn. However, it is very photogenic and a must see of the city. Nijo Castle also sees a lot of visitors but is slightly more spacious than Kinkakuji. The castle is perhaps best known for its inventive "nightingale" floors, which were fitted with a device to make them squeak, thus safeguarding the castle's occupants from intruders. The palace garden is also beautiful, designed and executed by tea master and architect Kobori Enshu. We also pay a visit to Ryoanji, close to Kinkakuji. The dry raked gravel of the Zen garden here is a collection of 15 rocks, 14 of which are visible at any one time. There has never been an explanation of the garden's design, but gazing on it may well bring enlightenment, one day! There is also time today to visit a yuzen dyeing workshop, which is the traditional form of dyeing kimono materials; a very highly refined skill.

 **Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto**
Breakfast is included

**Thursday, 01
November 2012**

MORNING VISIT TO NARA

group excursion by private coach with your guide

Like nearby Kyoto, Nara was once the Japanese capital and a source of enormous cultural and religious outpourings. Unlike its more celebrated neighbour, Nara has survived relatively untouched by modern advances and remains a relaxed town dotted with temples, shrines and parkland. From the fifth and sixth centuries onwards this region was Japan's cultural heartland, and successive rulers displayed their devotion to the recently introduced Buddhist faith by building splendid temples and commissioning grand works of art. Many of these remain today, including the most famous, Todai-ji Temple, home to the great bronze Buddha housed in the world's largest wooden structure. The park is also a playground for hundreds of tame deer, which roam at will through the grounds of Todai-ji Temple.

CALLIGRAPHY & ORIGAMI LESSON

group excursion with your guide

This afternoon you have the opportunity to learn more about two traditional Japanese pastimes- Calligraphy and Origami. The course is organised by the Women's Association of Kyoto, whose members are proud of their skills and have become masters of these crafts over 10,15 or even 20 years. They are more than happy to share these skills with you. This is a very personal experience and one which will hopefully stay with you for many years to come.

Calligraphy is a beautiful art form in Japan and for centuries was used as a practice for finer writings in everyday use. Gradually it developed to an art and appreciated for its intricacy and varying styles. Brush strokes, including the pressure used and the direction painted, are important indications of the artists' expression and skill. You will learn to paint a Japanese character of your choice.

Origami is paper folding, usually learnt at a young age but developed to create fantastic shapes including animals or decorative boxes. The most well known origami shape is that of the crane, tens of thousands of which you will have seen at the Peace Park in Hiroshima.

DINNER AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT INCLUDING MAIKO PERFORMANCE

group excursion with your guide

Maiko are trainee Geisha (Geiko in Kyoto dialect) who train for six years before becoming fully fledged Geisha. They learn skills such as dance, singing and instrument playing as well as how to entertain guests with conversation. They attend functions at discrete tea houses throughout Kyoto and live and work in five "hanamachi" (literally flower towns) in the city. There are fewer than 2000 Geisha and Maiko in Japan today; in the 1920s there were as many as 80,000. As such, time spent in the company of a Maiko is now a rare and unique experience, open only to a select few.

Maiko perform at Ganko Nijo-en, a traditional restaurant located near to the Kamogawa River in central Kyoto, with an ornate landscaped garden dating back over 400 years. We will be dining here on a sushi and kaiseki (banquet) set menu. Please advise your specialist if you have any food allergies or special requests.



Kyoto 'Maiko' apprentice Geisha, Gion District

LUGGAGE TRANSFER SERVICE INFORMATION

pre-arranged and pre-paid

Your main cases will be sent to **Tokyo**, so please have sufficient clothing and other essentials for tonight.

 **Kyoto Okura Hotel, Kyoto**
Breakfast is included

**Friday, 02
November 2012**

KYOTO TO TOKYO BY BULLET TRAIN

shared transfer accompanied by your guide

The journey back to Tokyo takes around 2 and half hours by shinkansen bullet train, passing under the shadow of Mt Fuji en-route.

FAREWELL DINNER

dinner at Gonpachi restaurant

This popular chain restaurant has various outlets in the city but our favourite is the Ginza branch where we dine tonight. The restaurant serves up a mixture of charcoal grilled meat and vegetable skewers and grilled fish, along with sushi in a side room. The restaurant has a great ambience and is the perfect setting for our final evening meal of the tour.

 **Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo**
Breakfast and dinner are included

**Saturday, 03
November 2012**

LIMOUSINE BUS FROM HOTEL TO NARITA AIRPORT

shared transfer accompanied by your guide

Your guide will accompany you to the airport, which will be by shared limousine bus. There will be other pick-ups en-route to the airport.

TOKYO TO LONDON

British Airways flight - Flight No: TBC - Dep: TBC - Arr: TBC - (same day); Class: Economy class; Non-stop flight;

Please note that flight times have not yet been confirmed as flight schedules for 2012 have not yet been released.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Flight times and the daily order of sightseeing are subject to change.
- Transfer times are approximate and subject to local conditions at the time of travel.
- All flight times are local.

ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION

Your accommodation is described on the following pages. Please do not hesitate to call us if you require any further information about any of the properties. We classify accommodation into the following categories. These are for your guidance only, they are based on the opinions of our staff and are therefore quite subjective.

OUR ACCOMMODATION GRADING SYSTEM

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Basic: | Very primitive accommodation where we are not aware of anything better. |
| Simple: | Clean and simple but limited facilities. |
| Medium: | A good standard of accommodation, reasonable range of facilities. |
| First Class: | A high standard of accommodation with a wide range of facilities. |
| Deluxe: | Superb accommodation with facilities and service to match. |
| Opulent: | The world's most unashamedly luxurious hotels and resorts. |

KEIO PLAZA HOTEL, SHINJUKU, TOKYO

First Class

This popular hotel is located in the heart of Tokyo's business district, just a few minutes' walk from bustling Shinjuku Station. The rooms are conventional in style and décor and many have great views of the impressive cityscape. This 1450 room hotel has a large selection of restaurants, boasting cuisine from around the world. During the summer the hotel's outdoor pool opens, and unusually for Japan, is free for guests.

Our opinion: One of Tokyo's better 'International Hotels' in Shinjuku, the capital's most vibrant locality.



Keio Plaza Hotel, Shinjuku, Tokyo

FUJIYA HOTEL, MIYANOSHITA, HAKONE

Medium

The first Western style hotel in all Japan, the Fujiya was originally built for foreign travellers at the end of the nineteenth century, and is now made up of several different buildings all constructed at various times since 1878 up until the 1960s. Parts of the hotel have even been designated as a cultural asset by the Japanese government and to this end rooms are large and comfortable (twin beds only) with classic teak furnishings and quirky design. The hotel has indoor and outdoor pools, hot spring bathing facilities, several restaurants, a famous tea lounge and even more famous Japanese curry. There is even a museum dedicated to the hotel's history. The current manager, Patrick, has translated information about the hotel and the surrounding area into English, please do ask for it on arrival. The hotel is well located in Miyanoshita and central to the sightseeing loop.

Our opinion: The emphasis here is on faded charm and the Fujiya is definitely in need of a face-lift. However, a sense of history permeates the entire hotel and it is a good characterful choice for those who don't mind a little shabbiness.



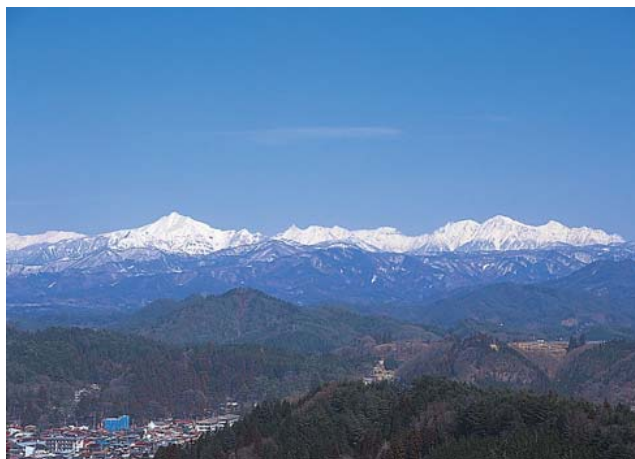
Fujiya Hotel, Miyanoshita, Hakone

HOTEL ASSOCIA, TAKAYAMA

First Class

Set back from the town in the deep forests and high mountains of the Japan Alps, the Associa Hotel offers a high standard of facilities in a peaceful and secluded location. The hotel has a couple of fine restaurants and like many Japanese resort hotels has excellent indoor and outdoor onsen bathing facilities, an integral part of any Japan experience. The open air baths on the top floor look out over the mountains and are particularly great for relaxation. Rooms are spacious and tastefully decorated, and on a clear day offer spectacular views over the Japan Alps.

Our opinion: Though slightly out of town, this makes the hotel a great place to relax and unwind away from the hustle and bustle of central Takayama.



The Northern Japanese Alps viewed from the hotel

EXCEL TOKYU HOTEL, KANAZAWA

First Class

The Excel hotels are the most upmarket of the Tokyu hotel chain, and the Kanazawa hotel lives up to this billing. Rooms, although basic and slightly dated, are clean and the beds are very comfortable. The hotel is well located in the centre of the action, with the main shopping areas and sightseeing highlights right on the doorstep. There are plenty of restaurants around the hotel and the famous Kenroku-en garden is only 500m away.



Standard room, Excel Tokyu Hotel, Kanazawa

ANA CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, HIROSHIMA

First Class

The ANA Crowne Plaza, as with all hotels in the ANA group, offers fine quality accommodation in a good central location. The hotel is located on Peace Boulevard, a wide tree-lined street, and within easy walking distance of the Peace Park and museum has convenient transport links to the tram network. The emphasis is on simple elegance and the hotel was recently renovated with chic and modern decor throughout and flat-screen TVs in the rooms. Staff are very helpful and professional and there are stunning views out to the island-studded Inland Sea. Japanese and western cuisine is served in the restaurant and there is a swimming pool available, however you need to pay a fee to enter.



Twin room, ANA Crowne Plaza

MIYARIKYU HOTEL, MIYAJIMA ISLAND

First Class

Situated on the shore of the Seto Inland sea within a few minutes walk of the ferry terminal, the Miyarikyu Hotel enjoys not only some of the best views on the beautiful, historic island of Miyajima but also one of the most convenient locations.

While the ryokan is fairly modern, with the benefit of a coffee shop, bar and ensuite bathrooms, the guest rooms are spacious and decorated in traditional Japanese style with tatami, shoji sliding screens and, in most cases, sea views.

The hotel has a wonderful onsen (hot spring bathing) up on the 5th floor, the use of which is included in the price. The baths have views over the shrine gate in the bay making it a very memorable experience.

Our opinion: The Miyarikyu is within a comfortable stroll of all of the major sights of Miyajima and benefits from the best of traditional Japanese hospitality and Western convenience. Dressed in your yukata after enjoying a relaxing hot bath and Japanese meal, why not slip on your "geta" sandals and take a short stroll among the stone lanterns and sacred deer to watch the sun set behind the "floating" torii gate, symbol of this ancient and sacred island.



Deluxe ocean view room, Miyarikyu Hotel

KYOTO OKURA HOTEL, KYOTO

Deluxe

From the outside this hotel is not much to write home about, but once inside our reasons for choosing the Okura Hotel as our preferred central hotel become more apparent. The rooms are pleasantly decorated and of a good size with views over the entire city. The hotel has a number of good dining options, including an excellent Teppanyaki restaurant. The main draw of the Okura is undoubtedly its location in the heart of Kyoto, convenient for the main entertainment and sightseeing districts. This deluxe hotel enjoys a wonderful reputation with the local Japanese, as the best for service and with fine food.

Our opinion: Despite its austere outer shell, the Kyoto Okura Hotel is a well run property with the best location of any hotel in the city. Modern rooms, friendly service and all the mod cons of a good international hotel.



Kyoto Okura Hotel