

# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS JAPAN 2019

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JAPAN CUSTOM TOURS LIMITED

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# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS

## JAPAN 2019 - TOUR SUMMARIES

### YOKOSO—WELCOME

Each cherry blossom (sakura) season is slightly different, the weather is the main driver of the blossom dates as spring arrives. In 2016 the cherry blossom season hit its peak in Kyoto and Tokyo at the end of March and beginning of April providing some great displays. In 2017, the season initially was forecast to be slightly early, but ended up a little late due to cold weather. The 2018 cherry blossom season was more than a week early in some locations and a few days early at others.

Due to positive feedback from our guests we are repeating our core two-week cherry blossom tours that begin and end in Tokyo in each case. The first of these tours commences on March 17th with start dates of 31st March and 14th April for the other two.

We have also designed a set of 10-day tours. These shorter trips include the flexibility to add additional days at the start or end of the trip, for those wanting extra free time in Tokyo or time to explore nearby locations.

The attached schedules indicate the dates for cherry blossom viewing in each location. These dates are based on the flowering times from the last ten years and are a guide only. The actual dates are out of our control. However, there are a couple of things that make chasing the blossom a little easier. First, the early part of the season is when plum trees flower, providing an alternative offering of spectacular colours. Second, the cherry blossom forecast refers to a specific “five petal” variety, and there are many different types of cherry that flower earlier and later, thus extending the season.



### BRIEF TOUR SUMMARIES (TWO WEEK TOURS)

#### EARLY CHERRY TOUR 17TH TO 30TH MARCH

Starting in Tokyo, we head to the Japanese alps and the onsen (hot spring) town of Togura. After an overnight stop in Kanazawa, we travel south to Hiroshima and beautiful Miyajima.

From our most southern point we then travel back to the old capital of Kyoto, before heading into the mountains again to the picturesque town of Takayama and a step back in time.



From here the tour is completed with the journey back to Tokyo.

#### CLASSIC CHERRY TOUR 30TH MARCH TO 13TH APRIL

The peak period for cherry blossom viewing starts in Tokyo at the end of March and into the beginning of April. This timing allows us to enjoy the sakura season at some of the famous and popular viewing locations around the city. Departing from Tokyo we then head south to Kyoto to visit a selection of cherry blossom viewing locations around the city and some of its famous attractions.

Continuing south we reach Hiroshima and the island of Miyajima with its beautiful floating torii gate. Turning north to follow the blossom we travel to Kanazawa to see its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle.

Heading away from the coast and into the mountains we enjoy a stay at a traditional Japanese inn with hot spring baths (onsen). Complementing the mountains, we next travel to the area north of Tokyo to the area around Sendai city. This includes a trip to Matsushima Bay, considered one of the “three views of Japan” and another chance to view cherry flowers. The end of the tour sees us return to Tokyo for the weekend.

#### LATE BLOSSOM TOUR 14TH TO 27TH APRIL

Our late cherry blossom tour includes a trip north of Tokyo to enjoy blossom viewing in Sendai, possibly Kakunodate (depending on the season) and Aomori (famous for Hirosaki Castle Park's 2600 cherry trees.)

This tour also includes visits to the mountains including a stay in Togura near Nagano at a traditional Japanese inn with hot springs, a visit to Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park, time in the western city of Kanazawa and also the picturesque town of Takayama.

The end of the tour has an option to return to Tokyo, or include an extension to the city of Kyoto and the myriad of sights that city has to offer.

# CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS

## JAPAN 2019 - BRIEF TOUR SUMMARIES

### JAPAN SPRING BLOSSOM TOUR 20TH MARCH TO 29TH MARCH

Starting in the metropolis of Tokyo, the tour heads across to the west coast of Japan's main island for an overnight stop in Kanazawa. Being early in the season the ume (plum) blossom should be in bloom at the Kenrokuen Gardens.

From Kanazawa the journey takes us next to Kyoto, the capital of Japan for more than 1,000 years. With hundreds of possible sites to explore across the city we cover a mix of famous/popular location and some of the less crowded sites.

From Kyoto we have two days to explore Hiroshima and nearby areas, before making an overnight stop in Osaka on the way back to Tokyo. This gives time to visit places like Iwakuni (Kintai bridge), Miyajima, Himeji Castle and the Dotonbori area of Osaka.



### HERITAGE BLOSSOM TOUR 1ST APRIL TO 10TH APRIL

Similar to our two week Classic Cherry blossom tour, this tour covers the peak period for cherry blossom viewing. Starting in Tokyo at the beginning of April we head to some locations famous for blossom outside of the central city, including the massive Showa Park in the west of Tokyo.

Departing from Tokyo we travel south to Kyoto to locations including the country's longest running annual festival, a cherry blossom event that has been running more than 1,100 years. As well as usual highlights of the city, we also take in some of the quieter locations. A day trip across to Nara is also on the itinerary.

Completing our southward trip, we stay overnight in Hiroshima and also in the beautiful canal area of Kurashiki near Okayama. Okayama is famous for its gardens and castle, and staying in Kurashiki provides an opportunity to experience a "high-end" ryokan stay.

Leaving Kurashiki we travel to Kanazawa and its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle before visiting a traditional Japanese inn and onsen near Nagano. We then return to Tokyo.

### NORTHERN BLOSSOM TOUR 16TH TO 25TH APRIL

This late cherry blossom tour includes a trip north of Tokyo to view blossom in places like Sendai, Kakunodate and as far north as Aomori (for Hirosaki Castle Park and its 2600 cherry trees.) The actual locations will be dictated by the weather and timing of the blossom. We also cover Nikko, known for its elaborately decorated and impressive temples and shrines.

This tour also includes visits to the mountains including a stay near Nagano to experience a for a traditional Japanese inn with hot spring bath (onsen) and a visit to the Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park..

We also stay in the western city of Kanazawa (with its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle grounds) and the picturesque town of Takayama. We then take a scenic bus and train route to back to Tokyo via Matsumoto and Kofu (passing Mt Fuji on the western side.)



# LOCATIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS

## TOKYO

Take advantage of this metropolis of 37 million people by exploring the areas that interest you. Visit the beautiful gardens, museums, and shopping areas.

For an introduction to Japan visit Asakusa and Sensoji Temple with its impressive Kaminarimon gate (thunder gate), Hozomon and pagoda. Hundreds of stalls line the entrance to this temple providing an array of souvenirs and goods for its many visitors.

Also head to one or more of the famous neighbourhoods of Tokyo: Shibuya and the “scramble” pedestrian crossing, Akihabara, Shinjuku, Harajuku, and Meiji Shrine.

For cherry blossom viewing we recommend Shinjuku National Gardens or Meguro River. The Imperial Palace East Gardens or Ueno are options or even Showa Memorial Park.



## KYOTO

Visit the Inari Fushimi shrine, famous for its 10,000 torii gates. For the energetic, take the time to climb Mt Inari (a two hour walk).

Day trip to the World Heritage Site at Nara to view Todaiji Temple and the world's largest bronze Buddha. Enjoy the deer park and other monuments of the first capital of Japan.

Enjoy cherry blossom viewing several sites around the city - sites depend on the timing of the season.

Visit the famous "golden pavilion" (Kinkakuji) and Nijo Castle and the Honmaru Palace for its landscaped gardens, cherry trees and preserved artworks.

Shopping at the 400-year old covered Nishiki Market, which includes a selection of local foods and other stalls. The Isetan and Takashimaya department stores are also excellent shopping options. The adjacent 300 year old Teramachi Dori shopping street is also a good browsing option,



## SENDAI

Sendai is certainly not crowded with western tourists. Around Sendai the city provides an open and relaxed city environment.

While in Sendai we head to Matsushima Bay, one of the top three views in Japan (a designated "special place of scenic beauty") to cruise around the pine tree covered islands and view the sacred and historic cinerarium caves.

For cherry blossom viewing we take the local train to Ogawara where more than 1,000 cherry trees have been planted along the river banks. Depending on the season we might also visit Kakunodate or Kitakami (one of the top 100 cherry blossom spots in Japan).

There is also an opportunity to visit the Rinno-ji Temple to view its beautiful Japanese garden.





# LOCATIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS

## HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima is known as the location where an atomic bomb was first used. In 1945 The city now focuses on peace and has an interesting Peace Museum and the neighbouring Peace Park and Atomic Dome.

The city also provides a base to visit the beautiful island of Miyajima and the famous "floating" torii gate, one of the "three views of Japan." The island includes forest walks, views across the Seto Inland Sea and a ropeway ride to the top of Mt Misen. Also close to Hiroshima is the interesting Yamoto Maritime Museum



## NAGANO/TOGURA

Stay at a 100 year old Japanese inn in the small hot spring ("onsen") town of Togura, 20 minutes from Nagano. Enjoy the traditional keiseki style meals. During dinner enjoy the dancing and musical entertainment provided by the local geisha.

Have an a relaxing soak in the inn's own hot mineral baths, and sleep on futons in spacious tatami mat rooms (note, the rooms do not have private bath/shower. If required, please request this in your inquiry and we will arrange nearby accommodation.)

Enjoy a day trip to the famous Jigokudani Monkey Park to see the "snow" monkeys, including a walk through the cedar forest.



## TAKAYAMA

The historic mountain town of Takayama provides variety in a small area. Stroll along the riverside morning market, enjoy the scenery and forest walking course, visit the Festival Float museum to see the intricate workmanship on priceless floats, several hundred years old and still in regular use today.

From Takayama take in the World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go and visit the historic village museum of Hida Mura.

A visit would not be complete without sampling the local Hida beef—an evening meal at a BBQ restaurant is recommended.



## KANAZAWA

Kanazawa is famous for the Kenrokuen Gardens, one of the top three gardens in Japan. With a range of plum and cherry trees, plus excellent design provides beautiful scenes all year around.

Also visit the Kanazawa Castle grounds and castle garden. Nearby is the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art as well as a number of other interesting, historic areas such as the Higashi Chaya (geisha teahouse) district.



# LOCATIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS

## HAKODATE

At the southern end of Hokkaido, the port town of Hakodate is the northern-most point for our cherry blossom tours.

Over one thousand cherry trees were planted along the moats of Fort Goryokaku making it one of Hokkaido's best cherry blossom spots.

The city is also known for the spectacular views from Mount Hakodate and its delicious, fresh seafood. With the extension of the shinkansen to Hokkaido the journey is now less than two hours from Aomori.



## AOMORI

The northern-most prefectural capital on the main island of Honshu, Aomori provides easy access to Hirosaki and across to Hokkaido and Hakodate.

The city itself includes several worthwhile attractions including the Nebuta Matsuri Museum, the Hakkodamaru roll-on/roll-off ferry that acts as a floating museum, and an archaeological site from the Jomon period (13000-300 BC).



## KAKUNODATE

A former castle town, Kakunodate is located on the shinkansen line to Akita. This small town is famous for its hundreds of weeping cherry trees (“shidarezakura”) and many people visit during the cherry blossom season.

The samurai district is home to some of the best examples of samurai architecture in Japan and Kakunodate also boasts some interesting galleries and museums.



## HIROSAKI

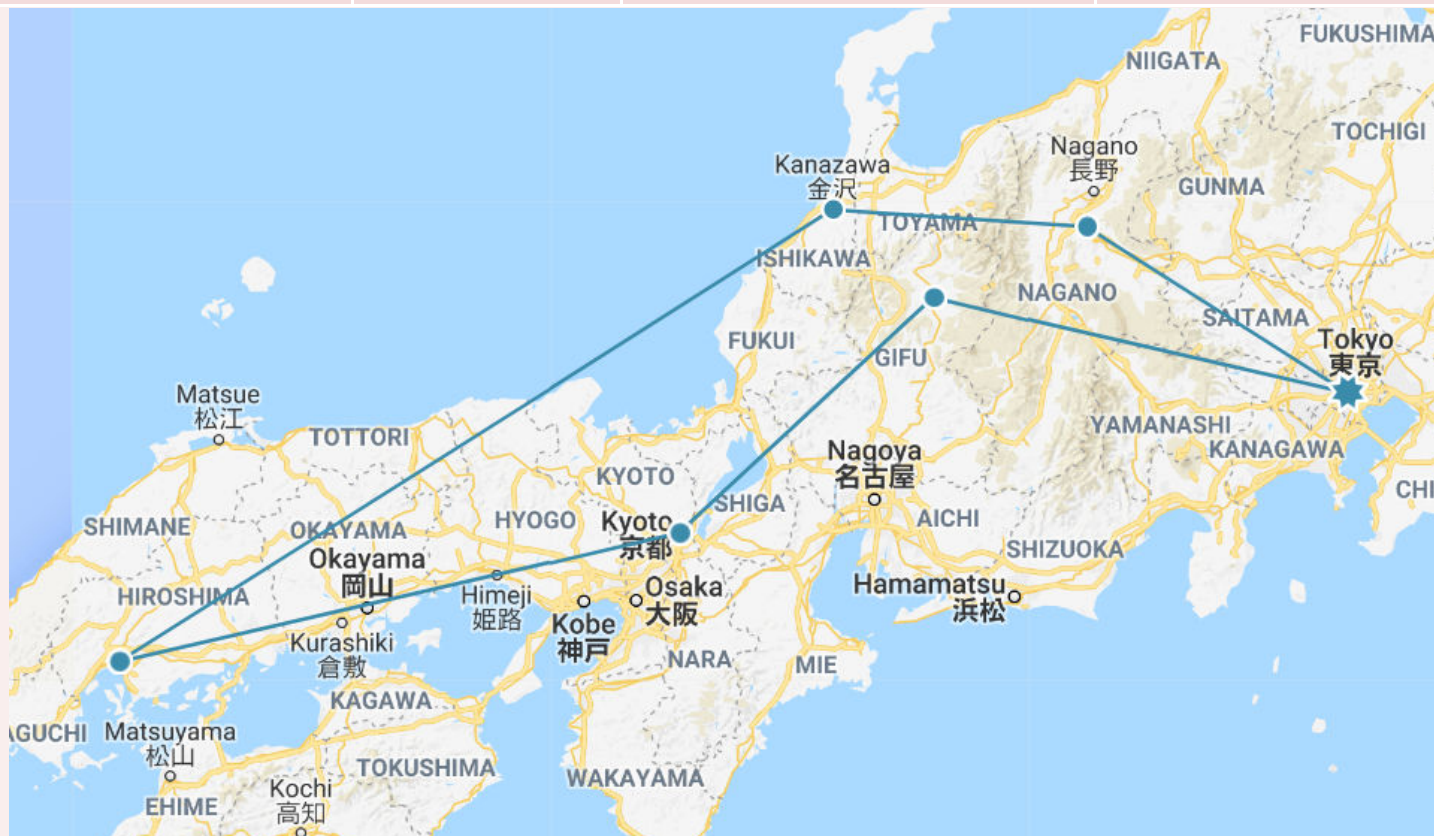
We visit Hirosaki Castle Park and the 2,600 cherry trees that contribute to the local cherry blossom festival. The current castle is counted among the few “original” castles in Japan as it has not been rebuilt in the modern era.



## EARLY CHERRY TOUR 17TH MARCH TO 30TH MARCH

JPY595,000 per person , 14 days, 13 nights, double/twin occupancy.

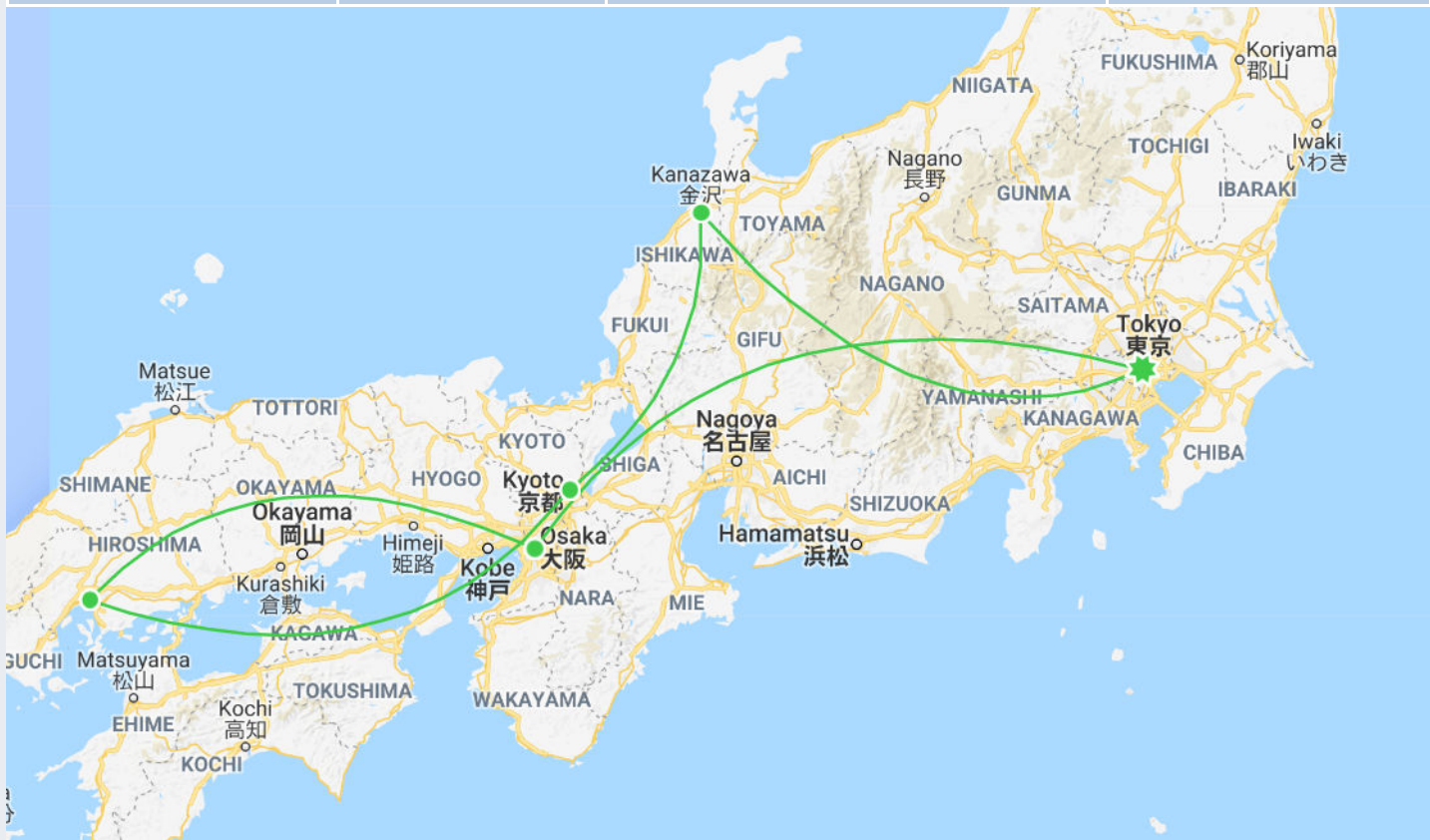
| Accommodation Dates                          | Location             | Highlights   | Cherry forecast<br>First bloom and full bloom |
|--|----------------------|--|---|
| Sunday 17th March to<br>Tuesday 19th March   | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Harajuku Meiji shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens                 | 23 March / 31 March                           |
| Tuesday 19th March to<br>Thursday 21st March | <b>Nagano/Togura</b> | Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining, geisha and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.. | 10 April / 15 April                           |
| Thursday 21st March to<br>Friday 22nd March  | <b>Kanazawa</b>      | Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle   | 3 April / 9 April                             |
| Friday 22nd March to<br>Sunday 24th March    | <b>Hiroshima</b>     | Miyajima Island, Mt Misen and Hiroshima Peace Museum, Peace Park and Atomic Dome.                    | 25 March / 4 April                            |
| Sunday 24th March to<br>Wednesday 27th March | <b>Kyoto</b>         | Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle Kinkakuji (golden pavilion), Heian Shine gardens.   | 25 March / 4 April                            |
| Wednesday 27th March to<br>Friday 29th March | <b>Takayama</b>      | The World Heritage Site “gassho-style” houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and historic mountain town. | 10 April / 15 April                           |
| Friday 29th March to<br>Saturday 30th March  | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing, at Ueno Park, and other famous sites around the city.           | 23 March / 31 March                           |



# JAPAN SPRING TOUR 20TH MARCH TO 29TH MARCH

JPY495,000 per person , 10 days, 9 nights, double/twin occupancy.

| Accommodation Dates                          | Location         | Highlights   | Cherry Forecast<br>First and full bloom |
|--|------------------|--|---|
| Wednesday 20th March<br>to Friday 22nd March | <b>Tokyo</b>     | Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Ha-<br>rajuku Meiji shrine and Shinjuku Na-<br>tional Gardens               | 23 March / 31 March                     |
| Friday 22nd March to<br>Saturday 23rd March  | <b>Kanazawa</b>  | Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kan-<br>azawa Castle  | 3 April / 9 April                       |
| Saturday 23rd March to<br>Tuesday 26th March | <b>Kyoto</b>     | Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip,<br>Nijo Castle Kinkakuji (golden pavilion),<br>cherry blossom festival. | 25 March / 4 April                      |
| Tuesday 26th March to<br>Thursday 28th March | <b>Hiroshima</b> | Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Hiroshima<br>Peace Museum, Peace Park and Atomic<br>Dome.                         | 25 March / 4 April                      |
| Thursday 28th March                          | <b>Osaka</b>     | Himeji Castle or Osaka Castle, the<br>Dotonbori area.  | 27 March / 4 April                      |
| Friday 29th March                            | <b>Tokyo</b>     | Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing,<br>at sites around the city.  | 23 March / 31 March                     |





CLASSIC CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 31ST MARCH TO 13TH APRIL

JPY695,000 per person, 14 days, 13 nights, double/twin occupancy.

| Accommodation Dates                          | Location      | Highlights  | Cherry forecast<br>First bloom and full bloom |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| Sunday 31st March to<br>Tuesday 2nd April    | Tokyo         | Blossom viewing, at Ueno Park, Shinjuku National Gardens and other famous sites                                   | 23 March / 31 March                           |
| Tuesday 2nd April to<br>Friday 5th April     | Kyoto         | Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle Kinkakuji (golden pavilion), cherry blossom festival.            | 25 March / 4 April                            |
| Friday 5th April to<br>Sunday 7th April      | Hiroshima     | Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Hiroshima Peace Museum, Peace Park and Atomic Dome.                                    | 25 March / 4 April                            |
| Sunday 7th April to Monday<br>8th April      | Kanazawa      | Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle  | 3 April / 9 April                             |
| Monday 8th April to<br>Wednesday 10th April  | Nagano/Togura | Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining, geisha entertainment and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park. | 10 April / 15 April                           |
| Wednesday 10th April to<br>Friday 12th April | Sendai        | Cherry blossom at Ogawara with its 1000 cherry trees. Matsushima Bay - one of the three views of Japan.           | 10 April / 15 April                           |
| Friday 12th April to<br>Saturday 13th April  | Tokyo         | Returning to Tokyo, Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, Harajuku and the Meiji Shrine.                                     | 23 March / 31 March                           |

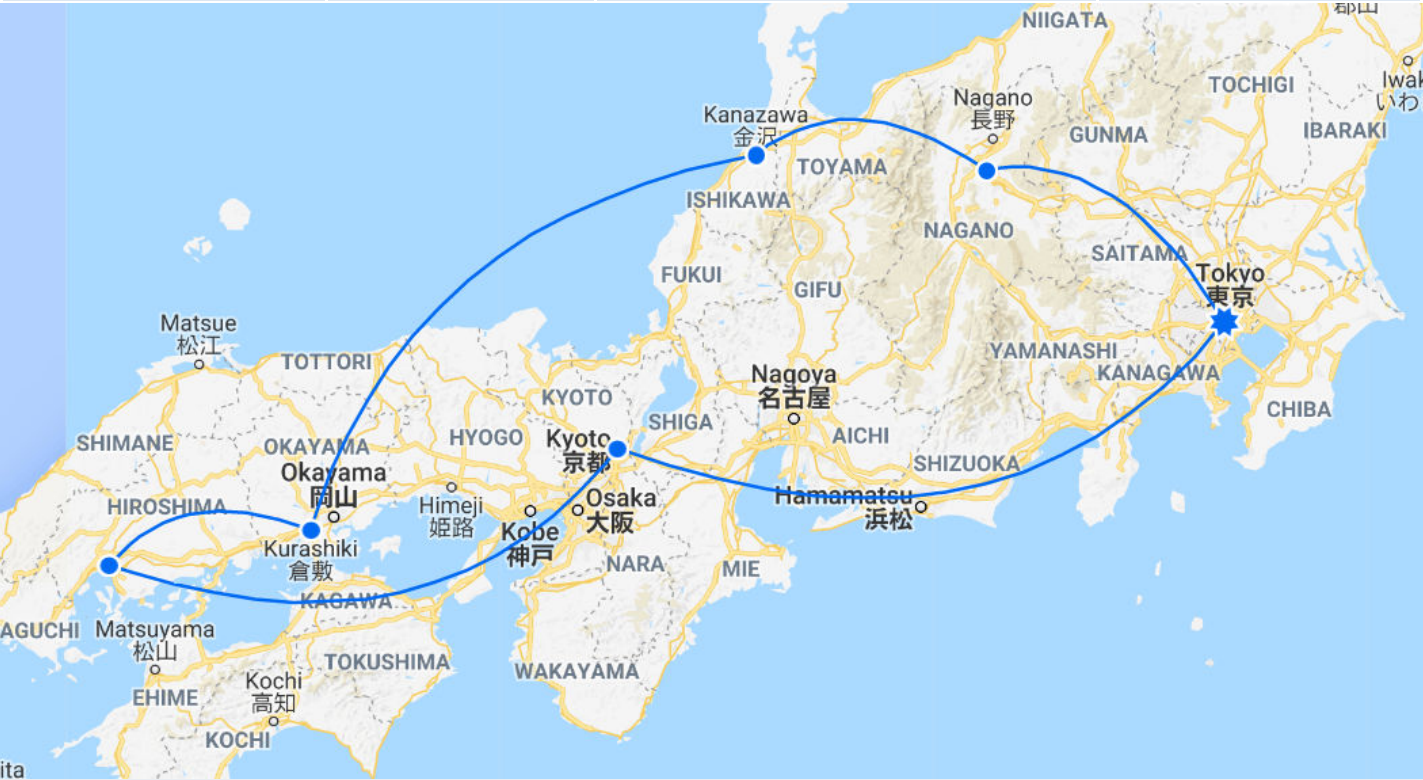




# HERITAGE BLOSSOM TOUR 1ST APRIL TO 10TH APRIL 2019

JPY525,000 per person , 10 days, 9 nights, double/twin occupancy.

| Accommodation Dates                          | Location             | Highlights   | Cherry Forecast<br>First and full bloom |
|--|----------------------|--|---|
| Monday 1st April to<br>Wednesday 3rd April   | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Harajuku, Meiji Shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens                  | 23 March / 31 March                     |
| Wednesday 3rd April to<br>Saturday 6th April | <b>Kyoto</b>         | Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle Kinkakuji (golden pavilion), cherry blossom festival. | 25 March / 4 April                      |
| Saturday 6th April to<br>Sunday 7th April    | <b>Hiroshima</b>     | Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Hiroshima Peace Museum, Peace Park and Atomic Dome.                         | 25 March / 4 April                      |
| Sunday 7th April to<br>Monday 8th April      | <b>Hiroshima</b>     | Okayama Castle and Kōraku-en, Kurishiki canal area.  | 25 March / 4 April                      |
| Monday 8th April to<br>Tuesday 9th April     | <b>Kanazawa</b>      | Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle   | 3 April / 9 April                       |
| Tuesday 9th April to<br>Wednesday 10th April | <b>Nagano/Togura</b> | Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining, geisha entertainment and mineral onsen.               | 10 April / 15 April                     |
| Wednesday 10th April                         | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing, at sites around the city.   | 23 March / 31 March                     |





## LATE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 14TH APRIL TO 27TH APRIL (SORRY, SOLD OUT)

JPY595,000 per person , 14 days, 13 nights, double/twin occupancy.

| Accommodation Dates                           | Location             | Highlights   | Cherry forecast<br>First and full bloom |
|---|----------------------|--|---|
| Sunday 14th April to<br>Tuesday 16th April    | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Sensoji Temple in Asukusa, Shinjuku, Meiji Shrine and Ueno Park  | 23 March / 31 March                     |
| Tuesday 17th April to<br>Thursday 19th April  | <b>Sendai</b>        | Matsushima Bay, cherry blossom at either Ogawara (with 1000 cherry trees) or Kakunodate for their cherry blossom and old samurai district. | 10 April / 15 April                     |
| Friday 19th April to<br>Sunday 21st April     | <b>Aomori</b>        | Hirosaki Castle Park and Aomori Nebuta Matsuri Museum  | 25 April / 29 April                     |
| Sunday 21st April to<br>Tuesday 23rd April    | <b>Nagano/Togura</b> | Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining, geisha and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.  | 10 April / 15 April                     |
| Tuesday 23rd April to<br>Thursday 25th April  | <b>Kanazawa</b>      | Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle   | 3 April / 9 April                       |
| Thursday 26th April to<br>Saturday 27th April | <b>Takayama</b>      | The World Heritage Site “gassho-style” houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and historic mountain town.                                       | 10 April / 15 April                     |
| Saturday 27th April                           | <b>Tokyo</b>         | Either return to Tokyo or optional extension to Kyoto.   | 23 March / 31 March                     |

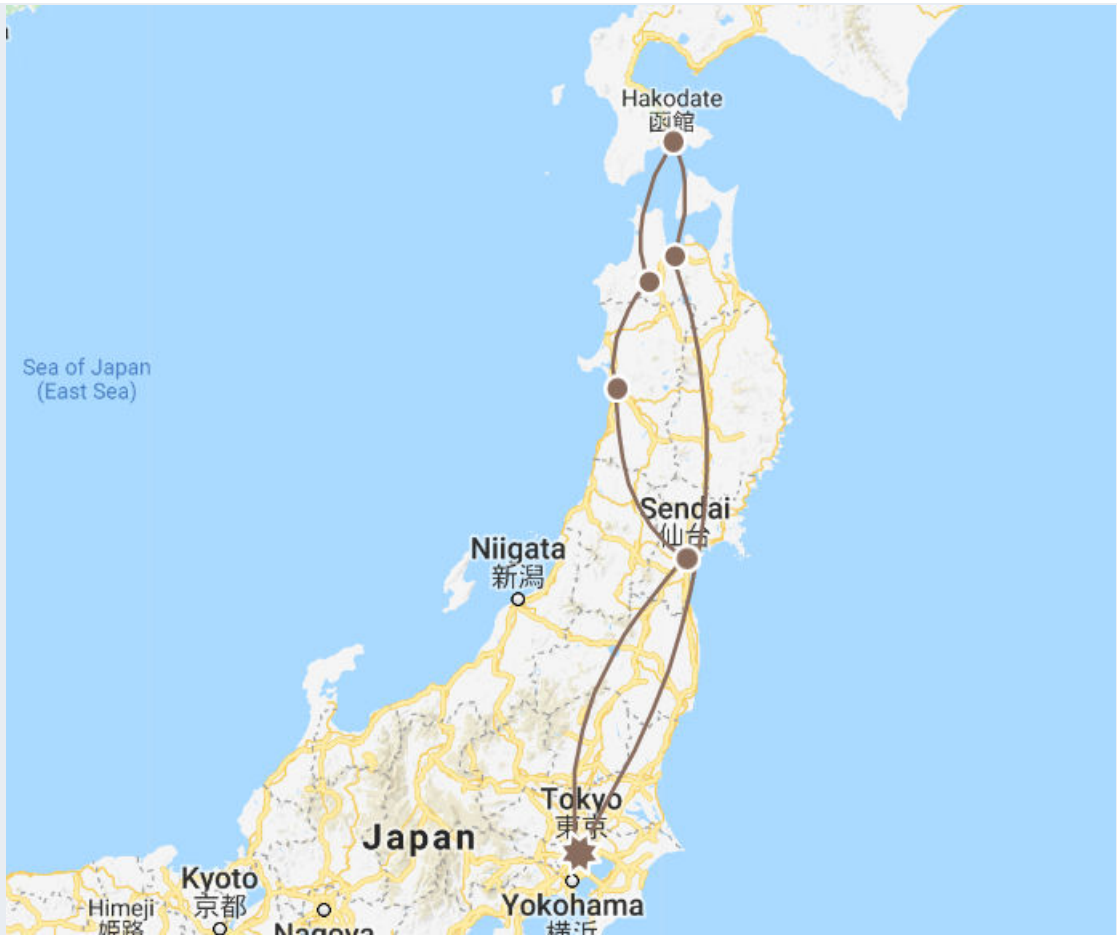




NORTHERN BLOSSOM TOUR 16TH APRIL TO 25TH APRIL

JPY495,000 per person , 10 days, 9 nights, double/twin occupancy.

| Accommodation Dates                            | Location             | Highlights  | Cherry Forecast<br>First and full bloom |
|--|----------------------|---|---|
| Tuesday 16th April to<br>Wednesday 17th April  | Tokyo                | Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Ha-<br>rajuku, Meiji Shrine and Shinjuku Na-<br>tional Gardens | 23 March / 31 March                     |
| Wednesday 17th April to<br>Friday 19th April   | Sendai               | Matsushima Bay, cherry blossom at<br>Ogawara with its 1000 cherry trees.                        | 10 April / 15 April                     |
| Friday 19th April to<br>Sunday 21st April      | Akita/<br>Kakunodate | Kakunodate for the cherry blossom<br>and samurai district.                                      | 9 April / 15 April                      |
| Sunday 21st April to<br>Tuesday 23rd April     | Aomori/Hirosaki      | Hirosaki cherry blossom festival,<br>Aomori Nebuta Museum.                                      | 25 April / 29 April                     |
| Tuesday 23rd April to<br>Wednesday 24th April  | Hakodate             | Fort Goryokaku and the views from Mt<br>Hakodate.   | 25 April / 29 April                     |
| Wednesday 24th April to<br>Thursday 25th April | Aomori               | Jomon archaeological site, Aomori Mu-<br>seum of Art.   | 23 March / 31 March                     |
| Thursday 25th April                            | Tokyo                | Return to Tokyo.  | 23 March / 31 March                     |



# TOUR INFORMATION

## BOOKING, HOTELS, ARRIVALS

### HOTELS

We select hotels in each city based on our personal experience and previous guest feedback. This includes considerations for location, space and availability. With these in mind we look for good quality 4\* and 5\* accommodation that meets the needs of our guests. This includes selecting superior and deluxe room options rather than the cheapest “standard” rooms.

We typically use these hotels:

- ◇ Tokyo: Cerulean Tower in Shibuya or Century Southern Tower in Shinjuku.
- ◇ Kyoto: Kyoto Century Hotel
- ◇ Hiroshima: Sheraton Hiroshima, Hiroshima Granvia or ANA Crowne Plaza
- ◇ Sendai: Sendai Westin
- ◇ Kanazawa: Holiday Inn ANA Kanazawa Sky or ANA Crowne Kanazawa
- ◇ Nagano/Togura: Kamesei Ryokan
- ◇ Aomori: Richmond Hotel
- ◇ Akita: Akita Castle Hotel
- ◇ Takayama: Hida Plaza Hotel or the Takayama Green Hotel.
- ◇ Hakodate: Four Points by Sheraton



### BOOKINGS AND DEPOSIT

Bookings are accepted by contacting us directly at

**[Admin@japancustomtours.co.nz](mailto:Admin@japancustomtours.co.nz)**

At the time of booking we request a 25% non-refundable deposit to secure your place, with the balance due one month prior to your departure date.

We price our tours in Japanese yen, but can convert this to your preferred currency. Once your booking is confirmed, your tour price is also fixed so you do not need to worry about currency fluctuations.

### RYOKAN AND ONSEN

Staying at a traditional Japanese inn or ryokan is part of the unique Japan experience that we like to offer our guests. However, there are some things to be aware of regarding this style of accommodation:

First, onsen is usually a large shared, single sex, bath without swimsuits (i.e naked). Second, bedding is on soft futons on tatami mat floors. Third, some properties do not include a private (in room) shower.

If you think these issues might prevent you from enjoying your stay at a ryokan, please tell us and we can book at a nearby hotel for you.



### ARRIVING AND DEPARTING

Each of our tours starts and finishes in Tokyo. We are happy to arrange accommodation covering dates before the tour starts or after a tour finishes to match your flight arrangements

We expect most guests to arrive during the days before a tour begins and we anticipate being able to meet guests at the airport (either Narita or Haneda) to assist with navigating the initial transfer to our hotel.

This means that before the tour begins guests will have free time to explore the city and to see those things that most interest them. We can help with suggestions and directions.





# TOUR INFORMATION

## OTHER GUIDANCE

### LUGGAGE

Guests need to be able to manage their own luggage. This helps ensure you do not over pack, and also relates to issues of fitness. JCT staff will have their own luggage to manage and we are here as guides, rather than baggage handlers. We do not employ people to manage bags, nor do we have a “bus” that carts luggage around the country.

We strongly recommend luggage is kept to one modest sized case and a day bag/pack. This makes our travel around Japan practical, as we travel with our luggage on the trains. Luggage storage on many Japanese trains is similar in size to aircraft overhead lockers (but is open shelves).

### ACTIVITY LEVEL

We require our guests to have an average level of fitness as our tours involve a lot of walking and some steps/stairs (a typical day covers 5-10 km of walking.) In some locations there may not be elevators or escalators (for example, in small railway stations). At many tourist sightseeing spots there will be steps - some places more than others.



### MEDICAL ISSUES AND FOOD

Guests need to disclose all relevant current and chronic illnesses, recent surgeries, disabilities and allergies (including food allergies). JCT needs to know about these before the tour is booked. Some examples of disclosures (examples of things we have been told about and others “discovered” after the start of a trip) include; a recent knee replacement, presence of a heart pacemaker, allergic reaction to bee stings, type 1 diabetes that requires insulin treatment etc. Well-managed medical conditions are not a problem but we need to know about these in case of emergency. Personal travel insurance (including medical insurance) is a necessity to avoid paying 100% of any healthcare costs incurred while in Japan.

Japan is not a vegetarian friendly country. Many dishes include meat ingredients or daishi (fish stock) and may not be listed as part of the menu. Due to the difficulty of recommending vegetarian dining options it is the responsibility of

the guest rather than JCT. We do not cater for vegan or halal cuisine as it is very difficult to find appropriate food options and adversely impacts on the experience of other guests. Dairy and gluten-free diets are easier to accommodate but are also the responsibility of the guest to manage .

### SMALL GROUP TRAVEL ETIQUETTE

JCT deliberately keeps its tours small and we work closely with you before and during the tour. We will treat you with respect and politeness and we expect the same in return. We like to say that traveling with us is like traveling with friends. Respectful, polite behaviour also includes with people on the tour, and interaction with the people we meet such as staff in hotels, restaurants, and stores.

We aim to provide flexible timing for sightseeing on our tours so you have sufficient time to enjoy the different places we visit. However, there are times when punctuality is important.

For days where we are travelling between cities, we reserve seats ahead of time for particular trains. It is important for everyone to be able to get on the same train as sometimes the next train may be several hours later.

On sightseeing days in different locations we will agree a morning meeting time to commence the days’ activities. This will usually be the same time across the trip, and be confirmed the at the end of the previous day in case there are any modifications for particular events.

