

CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS JAPAN 2027

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JAPAN CUSTOM TOURS LIMITED

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CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS

JAPAN 2027 - 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. Over the past few years the cherry blossom season has variously hit its peak in Kyoto and Tokyo matching our tours covering the end of March and beginning of April providing some great displays. For our 2024 and 2025 Classic Blossom tours we encountered brilliant displays across the country in multiple locations, despite the season being a few days early. Even for the 2023 season around two weeks earlier than usual we matched out travel dates to ideal locations as we make slight adjustments to our schedule to deliver stunning displays.

Due to positive feedback from our guests we are repeating our core cherry blossom tours that begin and end in Tokyo. For the 2027 season we scheduling our main “Classic” blossom tour, but also some early and late season trips..

We include some flexibility to add extra days at the start or end of the trip, for those wanting extra free time in Tokyo or time to explore nearby locations such as day-trips to the nearby Hakone for a possible view of Mt Fuji.

The attached schedules indicate the dates for cherry blossom viewing in each location. These dates are based on the flowering times from the last few years and are a guide only. The actual dates are out of our control. However, there are a cou-



ple 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

EARLY CHERRY TOUR 14TH TO 27TH MARCH

Starting in Tokyo we travel south to Hiroshima and the beautiful Miyajima island. Working our way north our next stop is Kyoto and a day trip across to Nara. Following Kyoto our journey takes in Kanazawa before heading into the Japanese



alps and the onsen (hot spring) town of Kamiyamada/Togura for a stay at a traditional Japanese Inn.

Inserting a location popular with previous guests we head north to the city of Sendai and the nearby Matsushima Bay. From here the tour is completed with the quick trip back to Tokyo.

CLASSIC BLOSSOM TOUR 27TH MARCH TO 11TH APRIL 2027.

The peak period for cherry blossom viewing usually starts in Tokyo at the end of March and into the beginning of April. Therefore, we include some of the famous and popular viewing locations around the city including the Shinjuku National Gardens and Ueno Park. For the early 2027 season we also included the Hamarikyu gardens that included green blossom as a contrast to the usual white and pink.

From Tokyo, the shinkansen (bullet train) carries us south to the historic capital of Kyoto for some of the famous sites around the city, including a day trip to the first capital of Japan at Nara. From Kyoto, we travel to Hiroshima and time on the beautiful island of Miyajima with its floating torii gate.

Leaving Hiroshima we head to the west coast city of Kanazawa and its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle buildings. We then head to the Japanese alps and Takayama before visiting Nagano prefecture for a stay at a traditional Japanese inn and onsen.

Rounding out the tour and chasing the cherry blossom north we visit the festival in the area around Sendai city. During our time in the city we also include a visit to the scenic Matsushima and a cruise around Matsushima Bay (considered one of the "three views of Japan".) The end of the tour sees us return to Tokyo on the Sunday.

CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURS

JAPAN 2027 - TOUR SUMMARIES

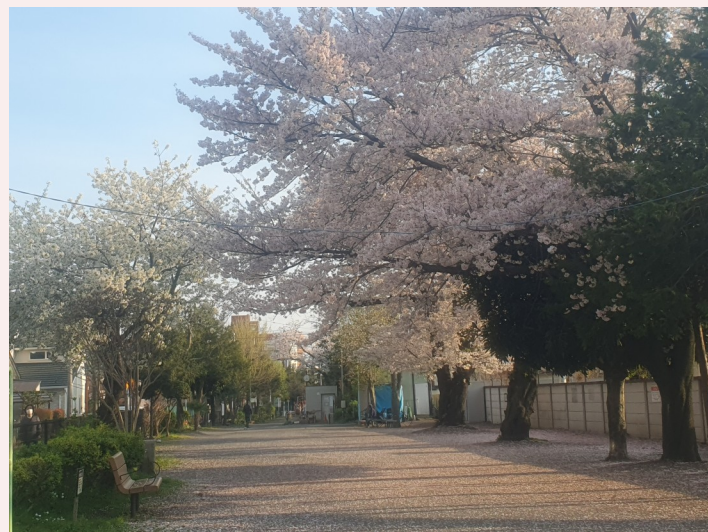
JAPAN SPRING BLOSSOM TOUR 20TH MARCH TO 4TH APRIL

This tour largely follows the route used for our “Best of Japan” but includes some less frequently visited locations

Starting in the metropolis of Tokyo, we then head to the Japanese Alps staying at a luxury ryokan in Matsumoto. A scenic journey to the mountain town of Takayama.

Passing through Kanazawa for the famous Kenrokuen Gardens we go to Hiroshima for Miyajima and the famous floating tori gate.

Moving across to Takamatsu on the island of Shikoku we have time to include the Ritsurin Gardens and a day scheduled on



the art island of Naoshima. Returning to the main island with a stay at Okayama, the Korakuen Gardens and a visit to the picturesque Kurashiki canal district and historical quarter.

Our journey next takes us next to Kyoto, the previous 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. A day trip to Nara is included.

From Kyoto we take the shinkansen back to Tokyo completing the tour.

HERITAGE BLOSSOM TOUR 6TH APRIL TO 16TH APRIL

A slightly shorter and later tour similar to our Classic Cherry blossom tour. This trip covers the period a week after the expected “peak” for cherry blossom viewing accounting for later blooming varieties and if the main season is delayed.

Starting in Tokyo in early 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 at Hirano Shrine, a cherry blossom event that has been running more than 1,000 years. As well as usual highlights of the city, we also take in some of the quieter locations in the city including the blossom on display at Heian Shrine. A day trip across to Nara is also on the itinerary.

Completing our southward trip, we stay in Hiroshima allowing visits to the Peace Museum and park and Miyajima Island with its floating tori gate.

Leaving Hiroshima we travel to Kanazawa and its famous Kenrokuen Gardens and castle before visiting the mountain town of Takayama. We then return to Tokyo via the scenic route through the alps and via Matsumoto.

LATE APRIL BLOSSOM TOURS

We are also scheduling two late blossom tours that include locations north of Tokyo.

The Late Blossom Tour (14th to 27th April) includes cherry viewing locations in Sendai and Aomori before heading to the central parts of Japan. Previously we have extended this trip to include time in Kyoto.

Our Northern Blossom Tour (20th to 30th April) focuses on locations north of Tokyo to view blossom in places including Sendai, Kakunodate, Aomori (for Hirosaki Castle Park and its 2600 cherry trees), and as far north as Hakodate in southern Hokkaido.

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.



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 can 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 impressive Zuihoden, the mausoleum for Date Masamune, the famous feudal lord that ruled the area around Sendai.



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,



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

Some of the tour schedules include a stay at a traditional Japanese inn in the small hot spring ("onsen") town of Kamiyamada/Togura, 30 minutes from Nagano. Enjoy a 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 or 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.

EARLY CHERRY TOUR 14TH MARCH TO 27TH MARCH

JPY895,000 per person , 14 days, 13 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY995,000 single occupancy.

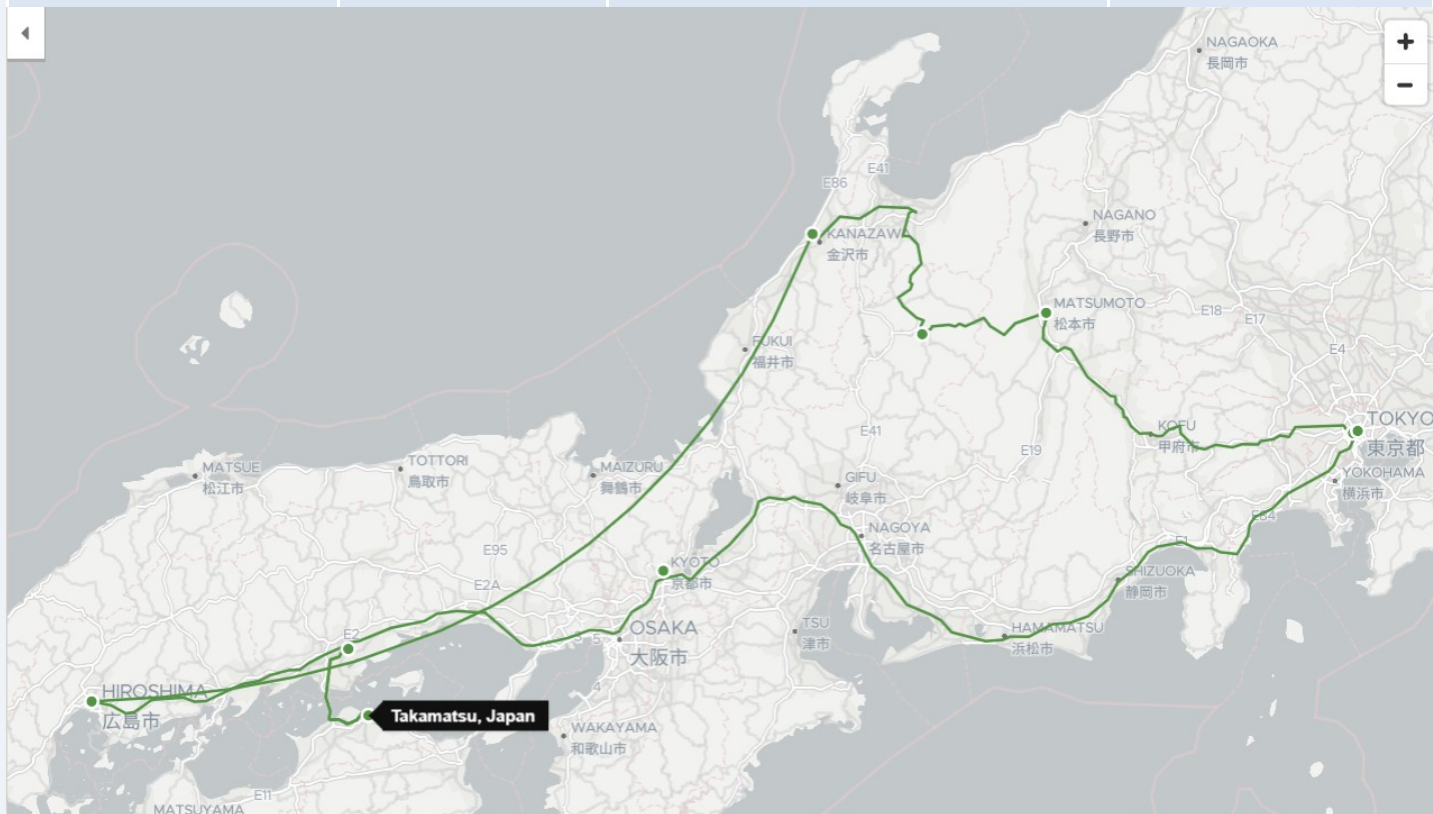
Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First bloom and full bloom
Sunday 14th March to Tuesday 16th March	Tokyo	Shinjuku, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Harajuku Meiji shrine and early blossom viewing around Tokyo.	23 March / 31 March
Tuesday 16th March to Thursday 18th March	Hiroshima	Miyajima Island, Mt Misen and Hi- roshima Peace Museum, Peace Park and Atomic Dome.	25 March / 4 April
Thursday 18th March to Friday 21st March	Kyoto	Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle Kinkakuji (golden pavil-	25 March / 4 April
Friday 21st March to Sunday 22nd March	Kanazawa	The Kenrokuen Gardens (late plum and early cherry) and Kanazawa Castle.	3 April / 9 April
Sunday 22nd March to Wednesday 24th March	Nagano/Togura	Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.	10 April / 15 April
Wednesday 24th March to Friday 26th March	Sendai	Historic sites around the city. Matsushima Bay - one of the “three views of Japan.”	10 April / 15 April
Friday 26th March to Saturday 27th March	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo for blossom view- ing, at Ueno Park, and other famous sites around the city.	23 March / 31 March



JAPAN SPRING TOUR 20TH MARCH TO 4TH APRIL

JPY995,000 per person , 16 days, 15 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY1,095,000 single occupancy.

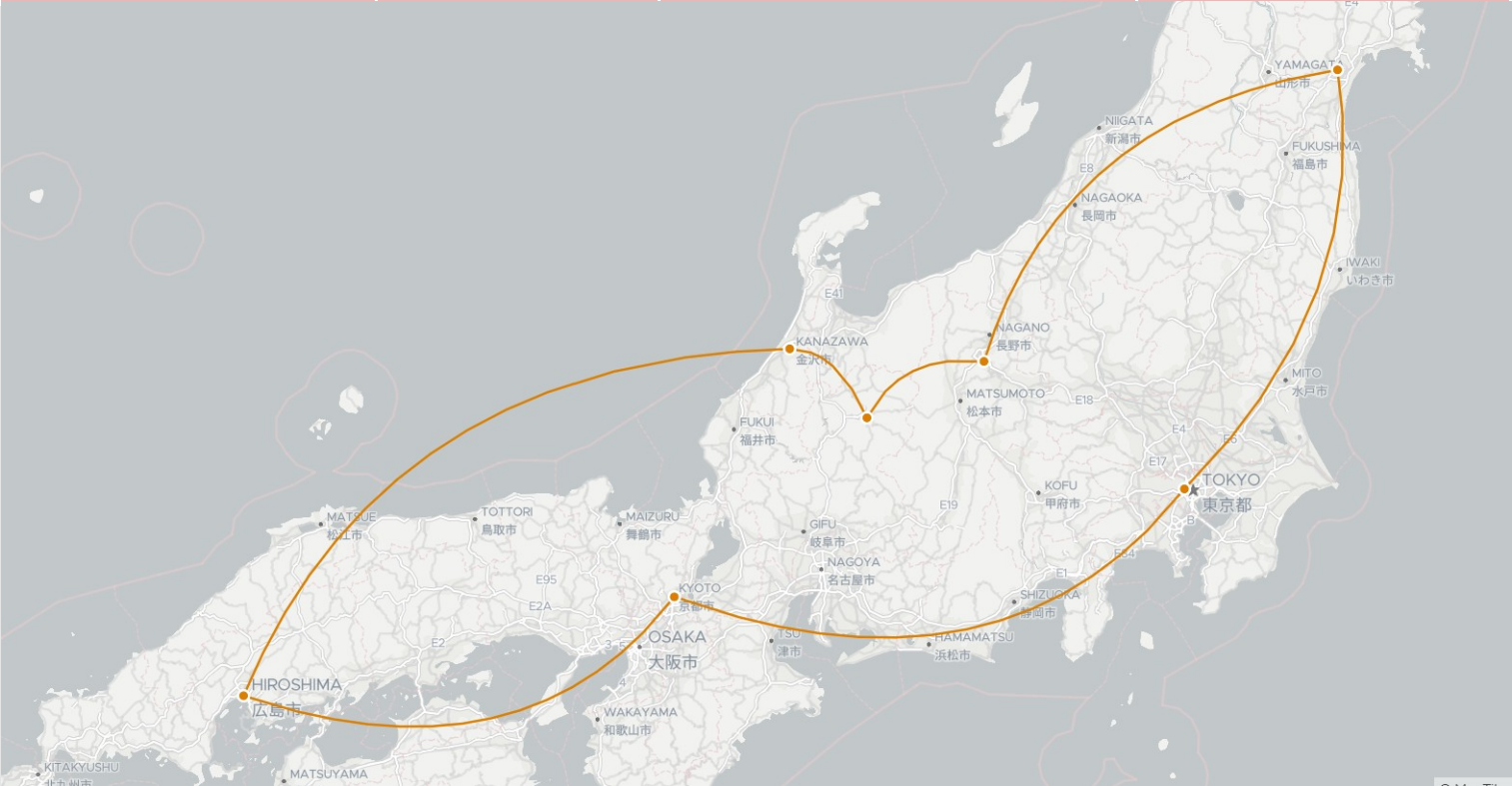
Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry Forecast First and full bloom
Saturday 20th March to Sunday 21st March	Tokyo	Shibuya, Sensoji Temple, Meiji shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens.	23 March / 31 March
Sunday 21st March to Monday 22nd March	Matsumoto	Matsumoto Castle, luxury ryokan/ onsen and Japanese keiseki meals	180 late blossom trees at the castle.
Monday 22nd March to Wednesday 24th March	Takayama	The World Heritage Site “gassho-style” houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and historic mountain town.	10 April / 15 April
Wednesday 24th March to Thursday 25th March	Kanazawa	Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and the Kanazawa Castle Park	3 April / 9 April
Thursday 25th March to Saturday 27th March	Hiroshima	Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Peace Mu- seum, Peace Park and Atomic Dome.	25 March / 4 April
Saturday 27th March to Monday 29th March	Takamatsu	Famous Ritsuin Gardens and day trip to Naoshima Art Island	23 March / 2 April
Monday 29th March to Wednesday 31st March	Okayama	Kurashiki canal district and historical quarter, Okayama Korakuen Gardens	25 March / 4 April
Wednesday 31st March to Saturday 3rd April	Kyoto	Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (golden pavil- ion), and cherry blossom sites.	25 March / 4 April
Saturday 3rd April to Sunday 4th April	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing, at sites around the city.	23 March / 31 March



CLASSIC CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 27TH MARCH TO 11TH APRIL

JPY995,000 per person, 16 days, 15 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY1,095,000 single occupancy.

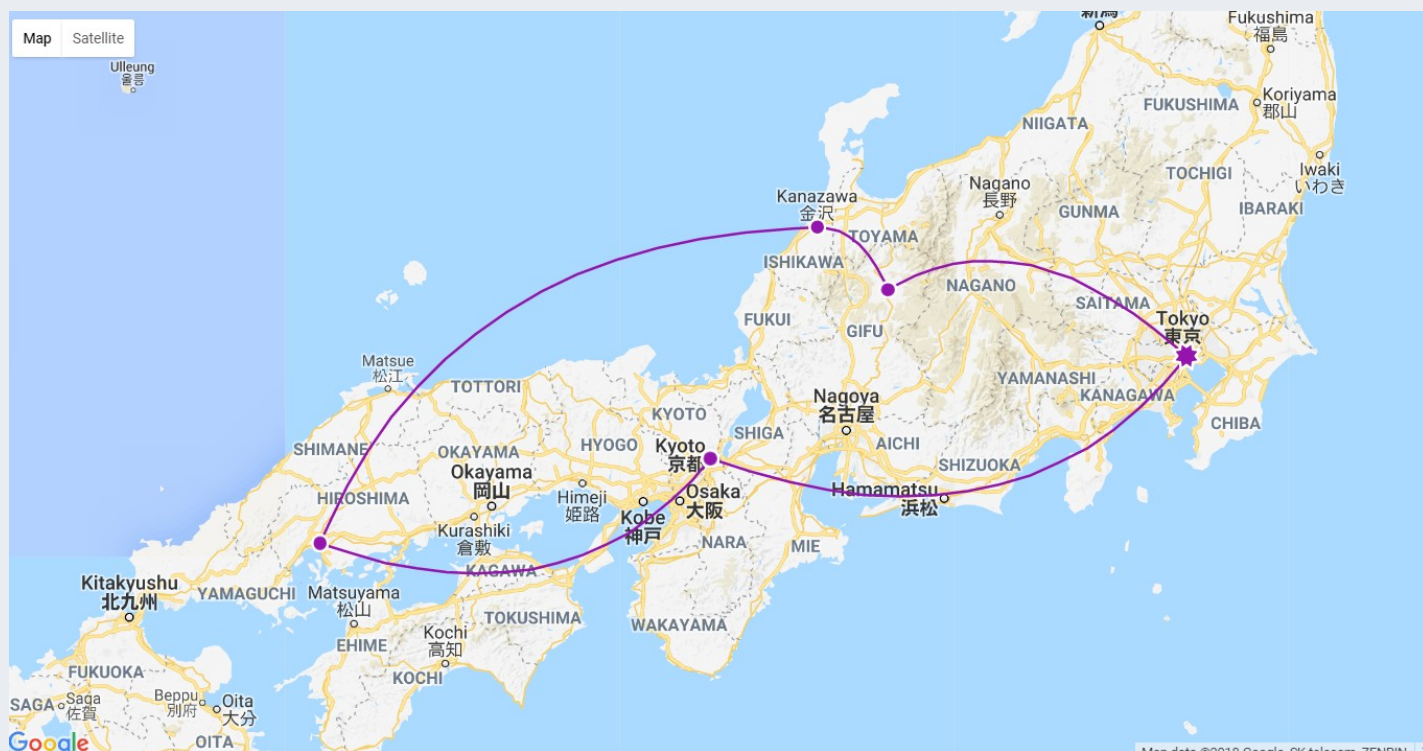
Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First bloom and full bloom
Saturday 27th March to Tuesday 30th March	Tokyo	Blossom viewing, at Ueno Park, Shinjuku National Gardens and other famous sites	23 March / 31 March
Tuesday 30th March to Friday 2nd April	Kyoto	Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (golden pavilion), and cherry blossom sites.	25 March / 4 April
Friday 2nd April to Sunday 4th April	Hiroshima	Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Hiroshima Peace Museum, and Peace Park.	25 March / 4 April
Sunday 4th April to Tuesday 5th April	Kanazawa	Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Tuesday 5th April to Wednesday 7th April	Takayama	Traditional “gassho-style” houses at Hida no Sato, Hida beef and preserved areas of a historic town.	10 April / 15 April
Wednesday 7th April to Friday 9th April	Nagano/Togura	Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining, geisha and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.	10 April / 15 April
Friday 9th April to Sunday 11th April	Sendai	Cherry blossom at Ogawara with its 1000 cherry trees. Matsushima Bay - one of the “three views of Japan.”	10 April / 15 April
Sunday 14th April	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo	23 March / 31 March



HERITAGE BLOSSOM TOUR 6TH APRIL TO 16TH APRIL 2019

JPY795,000 per person , 11 days, 10 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY895,000 single occupancy.

Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry Forecast First and full bloom
Tuesday 6th April to Thursday 8th April	Tokyo	Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Harajuku, Meiji Shrine and Shinjuku National Gardens	23 March / 31 March
Thursday 8th April to Sunday 11th April	Kyoto	Fushimi Inari Shrine, Nara day trip, Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji (golden pavilion), and cherry blossom sites.	25 March / 4 April
Sunday 11th April to Tuesday 13th April	Hiroshima	Miyajima Island, Mt Misen, Hiroshima Peace Museum, and Peace Park.	25 March / 4 April
Tuesday 13th April to Wednesday 14th April	Kanazawa	Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Wednesday 14th April to Friday 16th April	Takayama	Traditional “gassho-style” houses at Hida no Sato, Hida beef and preserved areas of a historic town.	10 April / 15 April
Friday 16th April	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo for blossom viewing, at sites around the city.	23 March / 31 March



LATE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR 14TH APRIL TO 27TH APRIL

JPY895,000 per person , 14 days, 13 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY995,000 single occupancy.

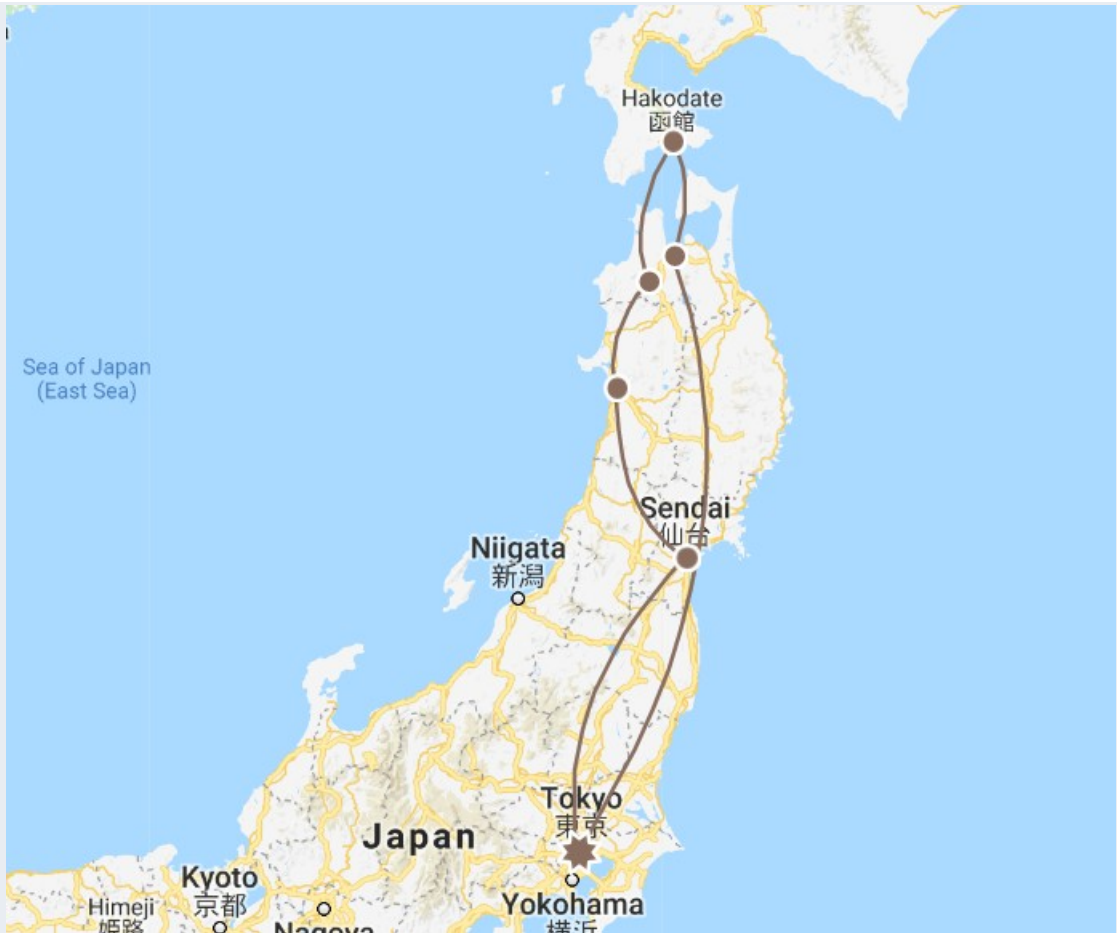
Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry forecast First and full bloom
Wednesday 14th April to Friday 16th April	Tokyo	Sensoji Temple in Asukusa, Shinjuku, Meiji Shrine and Ueno Park	23 March / 31 March
Friday 16th April to Sunday 18th April	Sendai	Matsushima Bay, cherry blossom at either Ogawara (with 1000 cherry trees) or Kakunodate for their cherry blossom and old samurai district.	10 April / 15 April
Sunday 18th April to Tuesday 20th April	Aomori	Hirosaki Blossom Festival and Aomori Nebuta Matsuri Museum.	25 April / 29 April
Tuesday 20th April to Thursday 22nd April	Nagano	Traditional Japanese inn experience with dining and onsen. Visit to Jigokudani Monkey Park.	10 April / 15 April
Thursday 22nd April to Friday 23rd April	Kanazawa	Famous Kenrokuen Gardens and Kanazawa Castle	3 April / 9 April
Friday 23rd April to Sunday 25th April	Takayama	The World Heritage Site “gassho-style” houses of Shirakawa-go, Hida beef and historic mountain town.	10 April / 15 April
Sunday 25th April to Tuesday 27th	Tokyo/Kyoto	Either return to Tokyo or optional extension to Kyoto.	23 March / 31 March



NORTHERN BLOSSOM TOUR 20TH APRIL TO 30TH APRIL

JPY795,000 per person , 11 days, 10 nights, double/twin occupancy, JPY895,000 single occupancy.

Accommodation Dates	Location	Highlights	Cherry Forecast First and full bloom
Tuesday 20th April to Wednesday 21st April	Tokyo	Shibuya, Asukusa Sensoji Temple, Ha- rajuku, Meiji Shrine and Shinjuku Na-	23 March / 31 March
Wednesday 21st April to Friday 23rd April	Sendai	Matsushima Bay, cherry blossom at Ogawara with its 1000 cherry trees.	10 April / 15 April
Friday 23rd April to Sunday 25th April	Akita/Kakunodate	Kakunodate for the cherry blossom and samurai district.	9 April / 15 April
Sunday 25th April to Monday 26th April	Aomori/Hirosaki	Hirosaki cherry blossom festival, Aomori Nebuta Museum.	25 April / 29 April
Monday 26th April to Wednesday 28th April	Hakodate	Fort Goryokaku and the views from Mt Hakodate.	25 April / 29 April
Wednesday 28th April to Friday 30th April	Aomori	Nebuta Museum. Jomon archaeologi- cal site, Aomori Museum of Art.	23 March / 31 March
Friday 30th April	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo.	23 March / 31 March



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.



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: Dai Ichi Hotel in Shimbashi.
- ◇ Kyoto: Kyoto Century Hotel
- ◇ Hiroshima: Sheraton Hiroshima or ANA Crowne Plaza
- ◇ Sendai: Sendai Westin
- ◇ Kanazawa: Nikko Hotel Kanazawa
- ◇ Nagano/Togura: Hotel Metropolitan in Nagano City, Kamesei Ryokan for our ryokan stays.
- ◇ Takayama: Tokyu Stay or Mercure Hotel.



BOOKINGS AND DEPOSIT

Bookings are accepted by contacting us directly at

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.

