

Day 1 Depart USA

Day 2 Arrive Tokyo

Travel by private car transfer to our downtown hotel, the four-star Marunouchi hotel in the centrally-located Marunouchi district and adjacent to Tokyo Station..

Accommodation: Marunouchi Hotel

Meals included: None



Day 3 Tokyo

We'll start our time in Tokyo at **Meiji Shrine** to learn about Shinto and experience *kagura*, a blessing ceremony of ancient, sacred music and dance. A short walk through **Harajuku**, a center of Japan's renowned youth fashion and culture, is followed by a walking tour on nearby **Omotesando** to see contemporary architecture and trendy street life. We will lunch today at a restaurant specializing in *tofu* and unique Japanese creations. After lunch, visits to some of the interesting museums in Tokyo Midtown will be followed by a private presentation at **Nuno Gallery**, known for innovative textiles and clothing by renowned designer Reiko Sudo. This evening you are free to enjoy dinner on your own.

Accommodations: Marunouchi Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 4 Tokyo

Today, we will set out to enjoy a leisurely walking tour of the **Ginza** neighborhood, including a visit to one of Tokyo's famed department stores for the opening ceremony. After lunch we will visit a small, architecturally significant museum (pending exhibit announcement), before heading to **Aoyama**, home to some of Tokyo's most fashionable and elegantly civilized stores and shops. Our visits there will include the Noguchi Sculptures on display at Sogetsu Hall. End the evening with a welcome **dinner** in one of Tokyo's fine restaurants, which are continually re-interpreting traditional cuisine.

Accommodations: Marunouchi Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 5 Tokyo

This morning we'll take a stroll through one of the quiet sections of Tokyo where we'll get introduced to a **Nihonga artist**, who creates delicate Japanese masterpieces on paper and silk. We'll end our touring day with a guided tour of the **Tokyo National Museum**. Afterwards you will **be on your own** for lunch and to explore other areas of Tokyo–Asakusa and the famous **Senso-ji Temple**; perhaps the **Sumo Museum** or even to enjoy shopping in the newly revived **Nihonbashi** district.

Accommodations: Hyatt Centric Ginza Tokyo

Meals: Breakfast



Day 6 Matsumoto

Today we will start our journey back in time. We head by train to Matsumoto where we will enjoy lunch in a restaurant set in a beautifully restored traditional storehouse. We'll then start our touring at **Matsumoto Castle**, circa 1595, one of four remaining from Japan's feudal period in its original condition. We will have some free time for you to explore **Nakamachi**, a pretty neighborhood of historic homes, many of which have been converted to cafes and galleries for crafts and antiques. Afterwards, we continue by coach to our *ryokan* for the evening, the deluxe, Relais & Chateaux property, Myojinkan, where you can enjoy the *onsen* (hot spring) baths and a full-course *kaiseki* (multi-course) banquet dinner served Japanese style.

Accommodation: Myojinkan Ryokan

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 7 Narai Juku/Kyoto

After our luxurious Japanese *ryokan* breakfast, we will travel by coach to one of the original eleven post-towns along the **Nakasendo Road**. The winding and arduous road through the mountains and the Kiso valley connected Kyoto to the capital in Edo. Several post towns have been carefully restored and a visit to one of these truly is like walking the path of the *samurai* and *ronin* of old. **Narai juku** was a prosperous inn town (called Narai Senken – a thousand inns) and its unique architectural style of overhanging second-floors survives to this day. We will have several hours to stroll through the town, explore the small local temples and lunch on your own. Afterwards, we will transfer by express train to Nagoya before heading to Kyoto via **Shinkansen** (bullet) train. Our hotel for the remainder of our tour is the five-star Hyatt Regency Kyoto, located in the quiet Higashiyama area. Dinner will be at your leisure this evening.

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8 Kyoto

Start our touring day with a tea ceremony where you will be given a basic introduction to the **Way of Tea**, including the proper etiquette, in a private, authentic setting. Spend the rest of the morning at nearby **Daitoku-ji** Zen monastery, including visit to **Koto-in** and **Zuiho-in**. After a **Zen-style vegetarian lunch** travel to eastern Kyoto to visit a young Rinzai zen priest at **Zenge-in** in the eastern hills, for a chat about his years cloistered in a classic Zen monastery and his new life as the abbot of a small Zen temple. To end the day, we visit a friend's gallery for an **introduction to Japanese ceramics**. Afterwards you can have an optional walk along the Philosopher's path or a visit to **Ginkaku-ji** (Silver Pavillion). Tonight we will enjoy a **shabu-shabu** dinner of luxurious Wagyu beef and crisp vegetables dipped into bubbling broth tableside and served with traditional condiments and dipping sauces.

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9 Kyoto

This morning we travel to eastern Kyoto to visit an artisan whose intricately **woven silk cords** and tassels are commissioned by shrines, temples and Tiffany and Co. Our next stop is **Renge-ji**, a classic Taoist-inspired garden with special symbolism, including references to the crane and the turtle as well as the land of the Immortals. A **Kyoto-style lunch** will be served in a private room at Kyoto's oldest inn and garden, located along the Takano River. The current proprietor is the 20th generation in his family to run the inn. Afterwards we will have an **ikebana** demonstration featuring a wide array of ceramics and baskets used to enhance the display of seasonal blooms. End the day with a visit to the studio of a **calligraphy master** and performance artist to see her wield her gigantic brush to create a masterpiece-in-the-moment. Dinner will be on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 10 Kyoto

We begin today in Western Kyoto in **Arashiyama**, where the hills will be ablaze with the bright scarlet and burnished gold of **fall foliage**. We will start at **Tenryu-ji**, one of the oldest gardens in Kyoto, dating from the early 14th century. The garden was designed by Muso Kokushi, a renowned priest, diplomat, meditation teacher and garden designer. After a short walk through the **Bamboo Forest**, we will have a private tour of the **Hogo-in** villa, which is not open to the public. The villa is an outstanding example of highly refined and inventive *sukiya*-style carpentry. After our group lunch, we have a visit to one of Kyoto's many stroll gardens, made special by the autumn foliage. the **Nishijin** textile district to meet a 5th generation **master of gold leaf**. In his beautifully preserved, traditional Kyoto-style merchant house, he will introduce you to his intricate process used to create custom *obi*.

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 11 Kyoto

This morning, the early risers may decide to join our tour guide for an optional temple visit to attend a full **Buddhist service**, including a fire ceremony, performed by 40 chanting monks. After breakfast, start touring next to our hotel, with a visit to **Sanjusangendo Hall**, a 900-year old structure that holds an extraordinary collection of statuary in one of Japan's longest wooden buildings. The 1001 wooden statues of the Kannon, well-known from Sugimoto's "Hall of Thirty-Three Bays", sit row upon row for the length of the building with their phalanx of 28 National Treasure guardian entities in front. End the morning with a walking tour of the **Kiyomizu** and **Gion** area, which a short introduction into the life of the *geisha* and *maiko* for which Kyoto is so well known. **The rest of the day is free** for lunch and to explore Kyoto on your own. Some suggestions include touring with Esprit's custom **shopping** map in hand, visiting such iconic sights as **Kinkaku-ji** (Golden Temple), the 10,000 bright vermilion *torii* gates of **Fushimi Inari** or traveling by train to nearby **Nara**. Tonight would be a good night for an excursion to one of the many temples and gardens in Kyoto that are lit up to highlight the start of the fall foliage season. Your tour leader will have a list of available temples and directions. Tonight we will have a **farewell dinner** in one of Kyoto's many fine restaurants.

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 12 Departure

You'll have the morning free to take in the sights, shop or simply stroll Kyoto's varied neighborhoods one last time. Transfer by reserved van shuttle, per individual flight times, for your pre-arranged return flight from Osaka Kansai International Airport or Osaka Itami Airport. Meal included: Breakfast

Note: Actual visits and events will be finalized approximately 30 days prior to departure to allow for the inclusion of special exhibitions, visits and events, and are dependent on the schedules of our Japanese colleagues. A final itinerary will be sent to you about two weeks prior to tour departure. The itinerary is subject to change at any time.

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BENESSE EXTENSION

Day 12 Naoshima Island

This morning travel via train, van and ferry to Japan's premier art site, **Benesse Art Site**, three islands located on the Inland Sea of Japan.

Today we will take time to explore some of the installations and museums on Naoshima Island, including the **Chichu Museum**, the **Lee Ufan Museum** and the **Art House Projects**.

Afterwards, we check into the Benesse Park hotel. This Tadao Ando designed hotel houses numerous art pieces and is located right along the island's edge. Each room has its own installed art for you to enjoy while you are in residence. Dinner tonight will be at the Terrace restaurant, serving continental cuisine. We will then explore the Benesse Museum after hours.

Accommodation: Benesse Park Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 13 Naoshima Island

Today we will visit **Teshima Island** to experience the Archive and the **Teshima Museum** before having a quiet lunch at a local restaurant. We then travel on to Inujima to see the **Seirenscho Art Museum** and the local art House projects.

We will be served a contemporary interpretation of traditional *kaiseki* (multi-course, exquisitely presented meal) served on an array of artistic functional ware from kilns all over Japan. We will then explore the Museum after hours.

Accommodation: Benesse Park Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 14 Departure

Transfer by ferry and train to Osaka this morning for your return flights from Osaka Kansai International Airport or Osaka Itami Airport. Flights should be arranged for after 4:00pm to allow for ample time for travel and customs.

Meal included: Breakfast

Note: Actual visits and events will be finalized approximately 30 days prior to departure to allow for the inclusion of special exhibitions, visits and events, and are dependent on the schedules of our Japanese colleagues. A final itinerary will be sent to you about two weeks prior to tour departure. The itinerary is subject to change at any time.

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