

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012

16 day tour to experience Japan's ancient world

Tour Description

This tour offers a unique opportunity to travel with Michael Jay who will bring to life traditional Japan in the days of the samurai. We also walk ancient highways, meditate with the monks at mountain temples, and explore the history of remote islands.

It is ideal for those who enjoy adventure mixed with a degree of comfort, and also those returning to Japan and looking for something a little different!

Early November is a beautiful time in Japan, with warm afternoons and cooler nights that turn the Japanese maples a fiery red, a spectacular sight in temple gardens.

Michael Jay is in a unique position to explain the classical warrior culture of Japan being the only non-Japanese person to hold a samurai rank since William Adams, the first Englishman in Japan who, in 1600, became an adviser to Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu.



As a British Airways pilot and Group Commander in the Soma Horse Association, Michael was featured in a prestigious BBC 'The World About Us' programme about Soma Noma Oi, a three day celebration of skill in samurai horsemanship, and is a senior swordsman of Japan's premier and most ancient classical combat school, the Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu.



Tour Itinerary

Day	Schedule Summary	Transport	Accommodation	Meals
Day 1	Flight to Japan	Flight	Onboard	
Day 2	Transfer to our hotel in Narita and relax for the rest of the day.	Airport bus	Narita Hotel	
Day 3	Today we explore the beautiful historic town of Narita. We start by visiting the temple and its vast landscaped gardens. We continue to Boso no Mura to enjoy the recreated village, a living museum which brings to life the age of the Samurai.	On foot	Narita Hotel	B
Day 4	On our way to Tokyo we enter a traditional martial arts dojo for a rare demonstration of classical martial skill by Michael Jay and a Japanese colleague. In the afternoon we visit Sengakuji Temple where poignant graves tell of the heroic 47 Samurai who, in 1703, exacted a spectacular and terrible revenge for their lost lord.	Coach	Tokyo Hotel	B

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012

16 day tour to experience Japan's ancient world

continued from previous page...

Day	Suggested Schedule	Transport	Accommodation	Meals
Day 5	We travel north of Tokyo to Nikko, home to incredible natural beauty as well as one of Japan's best shrines. We will visit the intricately carved Tōshō-gū Shrine complex, and the Rinnō-ji Temple, which dates from the eighth century and houses three important Buddhist deities. From there we visit the Futarasan Shrine – a Shinto place of worship. We continue to the head of this valley, at 1300m altitude, to enjoy views of the picturesque setting of Lake Chuzenji and Kegon waterfall.	Bullet train + coach	Tokyo Hotel	B
Day 6	In the morning we visit the Sword museum to see a vast array of samurai swords on display. The beautiful fittings and incredible craftsmanship are beyond comparison. The rest of the day is free to explore at your leisure.	Local transport	Tokyo Hotel	B
Day 7	We travel on the bullet train north to Niigata, by the west coast. We take the high speed ferry to Sado Island and a visit to one of the biggest gold mines in Japan. The living museum shows how it played a significant role in the modernisation of Japan. It is a short journey on to our spectacularly located ryokan by the sea. You will have the rest of the day free to relax at the ryokan, taking in the beautiful natural scenery.	Bullet train + ferry + coach	Sado Island Ryokan	B,D
Day 8	We will see the work of the Kodo Cultural Foundation and a performance from the apprentices to the most famous Taiko drumming group in the world. Sado Island was an important trading post and we follow the history, exploring a life size replica of the original ships before strolling around the well preserved traditional port.	Private Coach	Sado Island Ryokan	B,D
Day 9	We return to the mainland and travel on two different bullet train lines via Tokyo to Nagoya. From Nagoya we take the train east into the mountains to an ancient village called Tsumago.	Bullet train	Tsumago Minshuku	B,D
Day 10	Today we explore the historic and beautifully preserved Nakasendo Road which runs through a number of picturesque post towns. We start from Tsumago, walking the original route as it gradually heads up the valley and over the low pass to another village, Magome. This is the best way to experience Japan as it was in the Edo Period.	On foot	Tsumago Minshuku	B,D
Day 11	We move on to Inuyama Castle. As one of only four castles designated a Japanese National Treasure, it is an ideal site to learn about how the Samurai designed these imposing fortresses. We continue south to Ise – the site of one of the most spiritual and sacred Shinto locations in Japan.	Train	Ise Hotel	B
Day 12	The Grand Shrine of Ise, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, is said to enshrine a sacred mirror – one of the Japan's Imperial Regalia. In the afternoon, we will see the amazing female pearl divers off the coast near Ise. We transfer by train to the holy mountain, Mount Koya. We will have a unique opportunity to try zazen meditation, and enjoy delicious shoujin-ryouri vegetarian dinner prepared by Buddhist monks from fresh home-grown produce. Spending the night at a Buddhist temple will without doubt be one of the highlights of your tour.	Train +funicular	Mt Koya Temple	B,D
Day 13	We'll visit Kongobuji, the traditional centre of Shingon teaching. The sect's founder, Kūkai, is enshrined at the Okunoin temple, which is surrounded by the peaceful and sometimes surreal Okunoin cemetery, Japan's largest. At the end of the afternoon we move on to Kyoto, our final destination.	Coach	Kyoto Hotel	B
Day 14	We have a full day sightseeing in Kyoto including the Golden Temple – one of the most famous symbols of Kyoto, and a tour of a traditional Kyoto townhouse, or machiya. To fully immerse yourself in the refined culture of ancient Kyoto, you will have a chance to dress in a beautiful silk kimono and enjoy real green tea prepared at a traditional tea ceremony. After lunch we visit Nijo Castle, the historic home of Tokugawa Shogun.	Taxis + local transport	Kyoto Hotel	B
Day 15	In the morning we visit Gion, the traditional home of the geisha. We follow the quaint backstreets of Higashiyama district connecting Gion with the splendid Kiyomizu Temple. Radiating an irresistible atmosphere of the past, they are lined with old houses and ancient pottery kilns. At the end of the afternoon we visit the fascinating Nishiki market in the heart of the city.	Taxis + local transport	Kyoto Hotel	B
Day 16	Transfer to Kansai International Airport for your flight home.	Airport train		B

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule	
Day 1 FLIGHT	Flight to Japan	
Day 2 NARITA HOTEL	Transfer to our hotel in Narita and relax for the rest of the day.	
Narita	Best known for the international airport outside the city, Narita is in fact a quiet city with a distinct flavour of traditional Japan. The main street, Omotesandō, is one of the best traditional streets in the county, with old wooden buildings lining the narrow road.	
Narita-san Temple	Narita-san temple, properly known as Shinsō-ji, was built to celebrate a victory in 940, but only really came to prominence when the abbot managed to convert Tokugawa Ieyasu to Buddhism in the 17 th Century. The temple continues to thrive, the old wooden buildings often acting as backdrops to festivals and celebrations.	
Boso No Mura	A working, open-air museum that show-cases life as it was in the Edo Period, Boso no Mura encourages visitors to try their hand at traditional skills, from paper-making to farming. The village contains samurai residences, farmhouses, and shops which all show how life was under the shogunate.	
Day 3 NARITA HOTEL	Today we explore the beautiful historic town of Narita. We start by visiting the temple and its vastly landscaped gardens. We continue to Boso no Mura to enjoy the recreated village, a living museum which brings life to the age of the samurai.	
Sengaku-ji Temple	In quiet suburban Tokyo, Sengaku-ji Temple is famous for an event which highlights the spirit of bushido, for here lie the graves of the 47 faithful samurai who gave their lives revenging the death of their lord. The story is a famous one throughout Japan, and despite the graves being over 300 years old, fresh incense is burned here daily in memory of their sacrifice and exemplary warrior spirit.	
Day 4 TOKYO HOTEL	On our way to Tokyo we enter a traditional martial arts dojo for a rare demonstration of classical martial skill by Michael Jay and a Japanese colleague. In the afternoon we visit Sengaku-ji Temple where poignant graves tell of the heroic 47 samurai who, in 1703, exacted a spectacular and terrible revenge for their lost lord.	
Nikko	Nikkō is best known for its spectacular shrines and temples built during the Tokugawa Shogunate, particularly the Tōshō-gū Shrine, which is dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu himself. Unlike the more austere shrines in other regions, the Nikko shrines are heavily carved and brightly decorated. Set amidst the mountains, Nikkō offers spectacular natural beauty: Nikkō National Park protects the stunning Kegon falls, Lake Chūzenji, and large areas of important wetlands, as well as ample hot water for bathing at Yumoto Onsen.	
Day 5 TOKYO HOTEL	We travel north of Tokyo to Nikko, home to incredible natural beauty as well as one of Japan's best shrines. We will visit the intricately carved Tōshō-gū Shrine complex, and the Rinnō-ji Temple, which dates from the eight century and houses three important Buddhist deities. From there we visit the Futarasan Shrine – a Shinto place of worship. We continue to the head of this valley, at 1300m altitude, to enjoy views of the picturesque setting of Lake Chuzenji and Kegon waterfall.	
Tōshō-gū Shrine	The Tōshō-gū Shrine is Nikkō's main attraction, and is dedicated to the first of the Tokugawa Shoguns, Tokugawa Ieyasu himself. Unlike more austere shrines elsewhere in Japan, the Tōshō-gū Shrine is elaborately carved, decorated, and gilded. Most famous of the painted carvings are those of a sleeping cat, as well as the three wise monkeys of Asian folklore. The shrine complex was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1999, and the detail is said to be the best remaining example of Edo period workmanship in the country.	
Rinnō-ji Temple	Not far from the famous Tōshō-gū Shrine and the Futarasan Shrine is Rinnō-ji Temple, Nikkō's most important Buddhist Temple. The temple dates back to the eight century, and is famed for its three statues, said to be Buddhist Incarnations of the native Shinto mountain deities enshrined at Futarasan Shrine, and are the largest wooden Buddha statues in Japan.	

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule
Futarasan	Futarasan is really a shrine in three parts, the main part of which is next to the Tōshō-gū Shrine. The beautiful red Futarasan Shrine is dedicated to Nikkō's mountains, in particular the long-dormant volcano, Mount Nantai, and makes up the third part in Nikkō's World Heritage trinity. Don't miss the sacred red Shinkyo bridge, which is generally closed to all feet not belonging to the Imperial Family.
Lake Chūzenji	A short drive behind the town of Nikko proper the Nikkō national park begins, at the heart of which is Lake Chūzenji. Formed when the now extinct Mount Nantai last erupted, the lake area is refreshingly cool in the summer, and once acted as a summer residence for foreign embassies to Tokyo.
Day 6 TOKYO HOTEL	In the morning we visit the Sword museum to see a vast array of samurai swords on display. The beautiful fittings and incredible craftsmanship are beyond comparison. The rest of the day is free to explore at your leisure.
Tokyo	Tokyo offers possibilities that no other city rivals: karaoke in glass-walled rooms, more Michelin stars than Paris, and the world's busiest fish market and train station. Japan's capital is a truly mesmerizing place, and giant TV screens, flashing neon, and cutting edge technology make Tokyo one of the most futuristic and thrilling places on earth. This is where modern Japan thrives, and you will be amazed by just how futuristic and hi-tech it is, and it is immediately clear why so many sci-fi novels and films have looked to Tokyo for inspiration. The old downtown, or <i>shitamachi</i> , still exists alongside the modern city, and tiny station eateries, ancient temples, geisha districts and traditional shopping streets - seemingly unchanged in the last century - rub shoulders with super-luxury hotels, sleek skyscrapers and high-tech shops. Tucked in amongst the concrete and the tangled though massively efficient train and metro lines, there are pockets of tranquillity to be found in Tokyo's abundant parks and gardens, which provide a welcome respite from the fast pace of the metropolis.
Yoyogi Sword Museum	The Yoyogi Sword museum houses many ancient weapons, some up to 800 years old. There are many beautiful Katana, Wakizashi, Tanto and Tachi, along with assorted Tsuba and intricate Saya. It is well worth it for art and martial arts enthusiasts. Nearby is "Aoi Art", a specialist shop dealing purely in ancient swords, spears, Naginata and armour, if you feel inspired to purchase your own!
Day 7 SADO ISLAND RYOKAN	We travel on the bullet train north to Niigata, by the west coast. We take the high speed ferry to Sado Island and a visit to one of the biggest gold mines in Japan. The living museum shows how it played a significant role in the modernisation of Japan. It is a short journey on to our spectacularly located ryokan by the sea. You will have the rest of the day free to relax at the ryokan, taking in the beautiful natural scenery.
Sado Island	Popular for its stunning natural scenery, green hills and cliffs dotted with strange shaped rocks and small islands, Sado Island also has an interesting, though dark history. Because of its relatively secluded location, the island was used as a place of political exile for elements showing a tendency to oppose the system in power. Some of the most famous people sent to exile on Sado include Hozumi no Asomi Oyu, a poet criticizing the Emperor, Emperor Juntoku disgraced in Joukyu War, Buddhist Monk Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of Nichiren sect of Buddhism, or Zeami Motokiyo, a dramatist and founder of Noh theatre, sent to exile for no particular reason. In the early Edo period, however, gold and silver were discovered on Sado island, and the significance of the island changed dramatically. More and more people, mostly homeless people from cities, were sent here to work under rather harsh conditions. The gold they extracted became a major source of revenue for the Tokugawa shogunate.
Gold Mining, Sado Island	From the moment that gold was discovered on Sado island, this gold mine was the most productive mine in Japan. It yielded about 400kg of gold annually and became one of the most important sources of wealth for the Tokugawa shogunate. The working conditions were miserable, and most workers did not survive long. As history progressed, new methods and techniques were introduced from the West and the area became an exemplary place where the entire history of mining technology can be seen. The mine was in operation until as recently as 1989.



In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule	
Day 8 SADO ISLAND RYOKAN	We will see the work of the Kodo Cultural Foundation and a performance from the apprentices to the most famous Taiko drumming group in the world. Sado Island was an important trading post and we follow the history, exploring a life size replica of the original ships before strolling around the well preserved traditional port.	
Kodo Taiko Drummers	The world famous Kodo Taiko group, which debuted at the 1981 Berlin Festival, has its roots on Sado Island, but received international acclamation for its creativity in exploring the limitless possibilities of Taiko – traditional Japanese drums. The group says that the sound of the great taiko resembles a "heartbeat" and what it tries to achieve is playing the taiko simply, with a heart of a child. After all, one of the meanings of "Kodo" is "children of the drum". Do not miss an opportunity to enjoy the rhythms performed by Kodo Taiko in their hometown.	
Shukunegi Port & Ship Museum	A handful of traditional houses clustered around an inlet of Sado's rugged coast, Shukunegi Port is one of the island's greatest charms. Formerly a centre of ship building, many of the quaint buildings are made of ship's timbers, and several can be visited. At the museum, a replica of one of the largest vessels once built in local shipyards is on display and the Edo-era junk can be fully explored by visitors.	
Day 9 TSUMAGO MINSHUKU	We return to the mainland and travel on two different bullet train lines via Tokyo to Nagoya. From Nagoya we take the train east into the mountains to an ancient village called Tsumago.	
The Kiso Valley	The Nakasendō Road runs through the very centre of Japan, brushing the shoulders of the Japan Alps and winding along river valleys and over forested passes. The best preserved of the five Edo Period highways, the Nakasendō Road connected Kyoto and Tokyo. Long stretches, particularly in the more mountainous regions, remain very much as they did in the 17th century, and it is still possible to walk the route of the highway between the old and new capitals. Of the nearly seventy post towns between Tokyo and Kyoto, the eleven in the Kiso Valley offer a glimpse of rural Japan as it once was: cobbled stretches of the old highway run between rows of traditional wooden houses in the mainly pedestrian villages, and forests cling to the steep slopes.	
Kiso Valley Preservation	Poverty, more than anything else, is to credit for the impressive preservation of the Kiso Valley towns: for a long time people simply couldn't afford to build new houses. In the 1960s town residents recognised these old houses as an asset, and though many of the old buildings date back to more recent times than the Edo Period, the government sponsored preservation project makes a lovely change from the more modernised towns prevalent in Japan.	
Day 10 TSUMAGO MINSHUKU	Today we explore the historic and beautifully preserved Nakasendo Road which runs through a number of picturesque post towns. We start from Tsumago, walking the original route as it gradually heads up the valley and over the low pass to another village, Magome. This is the best way to experience Japan as it was in the Edo Period.	
Tsumago & Magome	Tsumago, once just another post town on the Nakasendō road, is now the most famous of a handful of well preserved villages along the Kiso Valley stretch of the ancient highway. Many of the old houses sell the area's famous lacquer ware and other interesting crafts. During the Edo Period, all post towns had both a Honjin and a Waki Honjin. The Honjin was the home of the village headman; the Waki Honjin served as accommodation for the travellers of high rank who regularly traversed the Nakasendō. While Tsumago's Waki Honjin is a faithful reconstruction of the Edo Period building, the Honjin itself is the original, and the craftsmanship is stunning. Over the pass from Tsumago, Magome is slightly larger, with a mix of new and old buildings away from the strictly traditional main street.	
Nakasendō Walk	Walking from Tsumago to Magome along the old Nakasendō is a memorable trip, and the cobble stones are a dream to walk on. The path ascends steadily out of Tsumago, passing through first fields and then stands of forests. The descent into Magome is slightly shorter, with the steepest stretch just over the pass. It's pleasant to stop at the waterfalls along the way to rest your legs and take in the view.	

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule	
Inuyama castle	The main attraction of the small town of Inuyama is the Inuyama castle. Built in 1537 and surviving all natural disasters, wars and ownership changes, it is known as the oldest castle in Japan and was designated as a National Treasure in 1952. It is also the only privately-owned castle in the country and belongs to the Naruse family, which has been in charge of it almost continuously since 1617. The interior, with its collections of samurai armour and weapons offers a fascinating glimpse into Edo-era Japan. The main keep offers nice views of the Kiso River, as well as Mount Ontake, the highest mountain of Japan Alps.	 
Day 11 ISE HOTEL	We move on to Inuyama Castle. As one of only four castles designated a Japanese National Treasure, it is an ideal site to learn about how the Samurai designed these imposing fortresses. We continue south to Ise – the site of one of the most spiritual and sacred Shinto locations in Japan.	
Ise	Ise is known for its shrine, Ise-Jingu, one of Japan's largest and most important shrine complexes. Dating back to the 3rd century, the two-part shrine comprises an outer (Gekū) and inner shrine (Naikū). Shinto tradition dictates that the shrine buildings are rebuilt every 20 years, as exact replicas of the original, using all the ancient construction techniques: no nails, wooden dowels and interlocking joints. Wood from the old shrines buildings is then used to reconstruct the main torii gate at the entrance to the holy grounds. The last time the shrine was rebuilt was in 1993, and the architecture still reflects an ancient design that pre-dates the Buddhist-influenced shrine architecture found elsewhere in the country.	
Day 12 MOUNT KOYA TEMPLE	The Grand Shrine of Ise, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, is said to enshrine a sacred mirror – one of the Japan's Imperial Regalia. In the afternoon, we will see the amazing female pearl divers off the coast near Ise. We transfer by train to the holy mountain, Mount Koya. We will have a unique opportunity to try zazen meditation, and enjoy delicious shojin-ryouri vegetarian dinner prepared by Buddhist monks from fresh home-grown produce. Spending the night at a Buddhist temple will without doubt be one of the highlights of your tour.	
Ama Pearl Divers	The region surrounding Ise is famous not only for the imperial Ise-Jingu, but also for a fascinating tradition of free-diving, which is said to go back as far as two millennia. Ama, as the tradition is called, is a practice almost exclusively performed by women (originally only clad in loin-cloth), for their bodies covered more evenly with body-fat were thought to withstand the freezing currents of the Pacific ocean. Nevertheless ama diving is an extremely hard work, in fact originally forced upon slaves, and therefore it is hardly surprising that the tradition is slowly disappearing. At present it is practiced only by a handful of communities with the average age of the divers around 72 years. Although ama are now famous for pearl diving, originally they were diving for sea urchins, lobsters, shellfish, oysters and seaweed.	
Mount Koya	The holy mountain of Kōya-san is one Japan's most important spiritual centres: it is the heart of Shingon Buddhism and the resting place of the sect's founder, perhaps Japan's best known Buddhist, known as both Kūkai and Kōbō-Daishi. The mountain's eight forested peaks reach eight hundred metres into the clouds, surrounding the high plateau with a sense of serenity. With over one hundred temple complexes, the area offers a welcome respite from the heat and crowds of Kansai's cities. Staying on Mount Kōya is one of the best ways to experience Buddhist life in Japan: bathing before a dinner of traditional shojin-ryori, and rising for the morning prayers with the monks.	
Weather	Mount Kōya's elevation makes for cool nights even in the height of summer, and can be significantly chillier than the surrounding plain. We suggest taking an extra layer or two for your time on the holy mountain.	
Shojin-ryori	The shojin-ryori served at Mount Kōya's temple lodgings is a unique part of the shukubo experience. While not unlike traditional kaiseki meals, temple cuisine is generally vegan, and relies on heavily tofu and wheat gluten (fu) based dishes as well as seasonal vegetables and sea vegetables. Your meals will be served in tiny dishes on a lacquer tray, and we suggest trying all the dishes, even those you may not recognise!	

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule	
Bath Etiquette	Like at the onsen, or hot spring, bath water in temples, as well as minshuku (indeed, in all private homes) is generally shared. The etiquette is consequently also similar. While some minshuku and temples have large, communal bathrooms, others have small, private tubs. Both are used in the same fashion: leaving your clothes just outside (but inside the bathroom door), scrub thoroughly at the showers and rinse before stepping gently into the piping hot pool. Many people enjoy a scrub, soak, scrub repetition, which allows them to cool off somewhat and enjoy a longer bath.	
Day 13 KYOTO HOTEL	We'll visit Kongobuj-i, the traditional centre of Shingon teaching. The sect's founder, Kūkai, is enshrined at the Okunoin temple, which is surrounded by the peaceful and sometimes surreal Okunoin cemetery, Japan's largest. At the end of the afternoon we move on to Kyoto, our final destination.	
Kyoto	Kyoto, the most traditional of all Japan's major cities, has a phenomenal collection of temples and shrines, dating back to its days as the capital city and before. There are about 2000 temples in total, many having national significance, which give the city a relaxed and traditional atmosphere. Kyoto is where Japanese people go to see Japan, and overseas is well known for its lovely Zen gardens, the most famous of which is the raked gravel and fifteen stones at Ryōan-ji, as well as its iconic Geisha, best glimpsed in the early evenings in the Gion district. Kyoto is also renowned for its elegant kaiseki cuisine, and is the original home of the tea ceremony. Like nearly all of Japan's cities, modernisation has left its share of concrete in Kyoto, and often the most beautiful of the traditional buildings rub shoulders with less elegant post-war constructions or modern skyscrapers.	
Day 14 KYOTO HOTEL	We have a full day sightseeing in Kyoto including the Golden Temple – one of the most famous symbols of Kyoto, and a tour of a traditional Kyoto townhouse, or machiya. To fully immerse yourself in the refined culture of ancient Kyoto, you will have a chance to dress in a beautiful silk kimono and enjoy real green tea prepared at a traditional tea ceremony. After lunch we visit Nijō-jō Castle, the historic home of Tokugawa Shogun.	
Kinkaku-ji	Properly called Rokuon-ji, the temple of the deer park, Kinkaku-ji was built in 1398 by Shogun Ashikaga, and served as a flourishing centre of the arts before becoming a Rinzai Zen temple in 1419. Though the gardens are superb, featuring a large pond with islands representing the landscape of the Buddhist creation myth, it is the Golden Pavilion itself that people come to see: gold plated and startling against the backdrop of trees. The pavilion, reflecting in the mirror lake, is justifiably one of the best known images of Japan, though the building itself is a recent though faithful reproduction of the 15th century original. Appearances aside, the Kinkaku-ji is an important Zen site, and the temple houses priceless Buddhist relics in its gold-plated pavilion.	
Machiya	Tea ceremony is something uniquely Japanese, and today you'll have a chance to try the traditional ceremony in style. After arriving at Tondaya, you'll have a chance to explore the beautifully preserved machiya style house before being dressed in traditional silk kimono for your tea ceremony. The ceremony's only break from custom is to offer chairs to guests, which makes the fascinating ritual a relaxing experience for those unaccustomed to sitting for long periods on the floor.	
Nijō-jō Castle	Completed by Tokugawa Ieyasu, Japan's first shogun, in 1603, Nijō Castle is listed as a UNESCO world heritage site. The architecture was ostentatious for its day – designed to illuminate the shogun's growing strength in contrast to the emperor's dwindling power. Don't miss the nightingale floors, which worked as an early burglar alarm. The famous garden adjoins the Ninomaru palace. Attributed to the famous landscape architect Kobori Enshu, the garden features islands in a pond, and is said to be typical of the excessive designs of the Edo period.	
Day 15 KYOTO HOTEL	In the morning we visit Gion, the traditional home of the geisha. We follow the quaint backstreets of Higashiyama district connecting Gion with the splendid Kiyomizu Temple. Radiating an irresistible atmosphere of the past, they are lined with old houses and ancient pottery kilns. At the end of the afternoon we visit the fascinating Nishiki market in the heart of the city.	

In the Footsteps of the Samurai

October 14th – 29th 2012 Detailed Itinerary



Day	Suggested Schedule
Gion	<p>Called geiko in the Kyoto dialect, geisha are disciplined artists under an elaborately-coiffed exterior, and Kyoto geisha's famously rigorous apprenticeship as maiko ensures that the women who choose the lifestyle are talented and dedicated musicians and dancers. Geisha have, for many years, entertained at the most exclusive and important gatherings in Japan, and are proud of their status both as artists and national symbols.</p>
Kiyomizu Temple	<p>Overlooking Kyoto from the base of the eastern mountains, Kiyomizu Temple takes its name from the pure water of the cascade which runs down the hill behind the complex. Founded in 780, this temple of the Buddhist Hossō sect is older than Kyoto itself, though Kiyomizu-dera has been rebuilt many times over the years – most recently in 1633. The temple is renowned for its construction which uses no nails to support the elaborate wooden structure of the main hall. In addition to the three streams of clear water, believed to promote health, longevity, and scholastic success, the temple precincts house Shinto shrines dedicated to love, and many hopefuls come to try to walk, eyes closed, between the "love stones".</p>
Nishiki Market	<p>Nishiki Market – a long, narrow covered street packed with shops selling local specialties – is sometimes called Kyoto's kitchen, and it's easy to see why. Barrels of fresh and pickled vegetables spill out into the street, and the air is fragrant with the savoury smell of grilling sembei and steaming fish dumplings. Many of the shops offer free samples, and the Nishiki Market is a wonderful way to stock up on very Japanese picnic supplies for lunch, although there are plenty of restaurants as well if your appetite has been whet by the tastings. For more lasting souvenirs, we highly recommend the Aritsugi Knife Shop, which dates back to 1560 and stocks all kind of beautifully handmade kitchen equipment, from knives through strainers to the special cutters for making vegetables into flower shapes. Dintora sells Japanese spices, and is a wonderful place to pick up flavourings for your favourite foodie or to recreate Kyoto dishes at home. Fu, or wheat gluten, which is a staple of Buddhist vegetarian cooking, can be purchased at Fuka and also travels well.</p>
Day 16	<p>Transfer to Kansai International Airport for your flight home.</p>



In the Footsteps of the Samurai Tour 2012

October 14th – 29th 2012

Accommodation

Narita – Mercure Hotel Narita

Hotel

Convenient to both the airport and Narita city, the Mercure Narita is a modern, stylish establishment. With 248 rooms, an indoor pool, gym, and squash court, as well as a restaurant and bar, the Mercure Narita is an excellent place to recover from your flight, and is highly popular with in-the-know airline staff on stopovers.

<http://www.mercure.com/gb/hotel-5487-mercure-hotel-narita/index.shtml>



Tokyo – Mercure Hotel

Hotel

In the heart of Tokyo's shopping area, the Mercure Ginza is within walking distance from Ginza Dori and Harumi Dori shopping streets, the Kabuki Theatre and the Tsukiji fish markets. The subway station underneath the hotel provides access to all attractions and sights in Tokyo. The Mercure Hotel Ginza Tokyo offers a distinctive French flair and state-of-the-art technology. The Mercure Hotel boasts over two hundred rooms and numerous facilities, including a swimming pool, squash court, and gym.

<http://www.mercure.com/gb/hotel-5701-mercure-hotel-ginza-tokyo/index.shtml>



Sado Island – Azuma Ryokan

Ryokan

This ryokan is located on the coast in Nanuaua Kaihin National Park. Looking over the Sea of Japan, you get marvellous views of the sunset. You can stroll to the coast along a promenade in the massive garden. The ryokan is renowned for its seafood kaiseki dinners.

<http://hotelazuma.com/>



Tsumago – Hanaya Ryokan

Minshuku

The Hanaya is a small family run ryokan with a 300 year history located on the outskirts of Tsumago. All the rooms are Japanese style and the bathing and toilet facilities are shared among the guests, but separated by sex as is usual in these wonderful old inns. They have seasonal homemade cuisine which is served throughout the year. There is a new annex which is an international house and hosts many foreign customers. The annex houses the Japanese bath which is open 24 hours.

<http://hanaya-tsumago.jp/>



Ise – Toba International Hotel

Hotel

Facing the narrows across Ise Bay, the Toba International Hotel offers a selection of rooms ranging from traditionally Japanese to strictly western. Ocean-view rooms offer a stunning outlook over the water, while those with mountain views take in the verdant hills. All guests can appreciate the water from the terrace area, and there are also spa treatments to complement the hotel's open-air hot spring. Several restaurants, serving Japanese and French cuisine are available.

<http://www.tobahotel.co.jp/en/index.html>



Mount Koya – Ichijo-in Temple

Buddhist Temple

Near the centre of Koya-san's temples, Ichijo-in is located at the heart of Shingon Buddhism, making for a unique overnight experience. A number of the temple's 37 rooms are newly refurbished, and all are comfortable and Zen-like. The dinner of fresh, seasonal shojin-ryori, or Buddhist cuisine, is considered to be one of the best on Koya-san.

<http://www.itijyo.in.or.jp/>



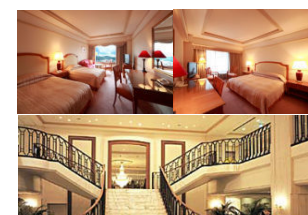
Kyoto – Nikko Princess Hotel

Hotel

The hotel Nikko Princess is located in the centre of Kyoto City, close to both the station and business and shopping areas. Most major sights are only a short ride away. The hotel's 216 guest rooms are very comfortable and equipped with all the modern conveniences.

The hotel offers a variety of dining options, in its Japanese, French, and Chinese restaurants.

<http://www.princess-kyoto.co.jp/english/>



In the Footsteps of the Samurai 2012

October 14th – 29th 2012

Tour Price and Booking Details

Price per person : £3,950 (without flights)

**Single supplement : £1095*

**A single supplement is necessary for all single bookings*

Prices are valid for exchange rate exceeding £1=115yen

Flight prices start from around £700 in economy, £1200 in premium economy, £2200 in business depending on airline and departure airport. Flight classes can often be mixed and then the airfare is approximately the average of the two fares.

Minimum number of people: 8

Maximum number of people: 16

The tour is guaranteed as soon as we receive 8 guaranteed bookings. In the unlikely event there are less than 10 confirmed bookings 60 days before departure the tour may be cancelled or offered to you with modified conditions.

Please note that there is a small chance that the price will change due to taxes or the pound - yen exchange rate (see above & booking conditions). However all prices are guaranteed from 60 days before departure.

Included in Tour Package Price

- Escorted service from first evening throughout tour available 24hrs/day up to and including final hotel departure
- Emergency assistance from our Japan Office throughout tour
- Japanese guide throughout in addition to specialist guide
- All accommodation
(total 14 nights in Japan and 1 night on overnight flight)
- All meals as shown on itinerary
(total excl. meals on flights; 14 breakfast, 0 lunch, 5 dinner)
- All train travel including the bullet train
- All other transport except during free time as shown on itinerary
- All entry fees and any other necessary fees and tips except during free time (Free time when you may need to pay some transport/entry fees on this tour is on the final full day in Tokyo)
- Luggage courier service whenever changing tour location

Not included in the Tour Package Price

- International flights
- Travel Insurance
- Meals not listed on brief itinerary
- Incidental costs such as personal laundry, drinks, snacks
- Passport and other visa document fees
(UK citizens do not need a visa for stays up to 90 days in Japan)

Full tour details including confirmed hotels will be sent to you by 15th August 2012.

Optional extras

We will be happy to make a personal quote for any of the following:

- Requests for additional services during the tour including theatre tickets
- Additional accommodation or personal tours before or after the scheduled tour

Bookings

Bookings are confirmed by sending a signed and completed booking form which includes all participants and making the deposit payment of £500 per person by cheque or bank transfer.

Once we have received the booking form and the deposit payment has been cleared we will send you booking confirmation with tour details within 2 working days.

We can accept a provisional booking which holds a place on the tour. To keep a provisional booking we must receive a completed booking form within 7 days. This will be held until you confirm or cancel. If we contact you before that, you will be given at least 7 days to decide. If you wish to confirm we must receive your deposit as cleared funds within 14 days.

Your Financial Protection:

All monies paid by you for an air holiday package as shown are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is 6977.

If you purchase a tour without flights then you are protected by our TOPP insurance. For more information see our booking terms and conditions.



Tour extensions

Your scheduled tour can be extended towards the end of your visit to leave more free time or to visit somewhere of particular interest. Our staff in Kyoto and Tokyo can arrange escorted extensions or make some suggestions for more independent visits to suit your interests. On our flight inclusive tours, we will happily change the date of your return flight at no extra charge, discuss your plans and provide a personalised quote. Almost anything is possible so please feel free to ask!

Visas

British nationals do not require a visa and will normally receive a 90 day permit on entry. For other nationalities, please check with the Japanese embassy at www.seejapan.co.uk/fvisitor.html.

Meals

There is a huge variety of food available in Japan including European and other world cuisines. Most visitors enjoy traditional Japanese food but strict vegetarian dishes are not always easily available. Breakfast is included at all accommodation during the tour with hotels usually offering a breakfast buffet including English, continental and Japanese dishes. Ryokan accommodation offers traditional Japanese breakfast and dinner comprising lots of small, immaculately presented dishes. For other meals during the tour, we can offer guidance on the best local restaurants and delicacies if you would like to explore on your own. Alternatively, we can usually join you for dinner if you are unsure and need help deciphering the menu! We can also recommend local European, American or Asian restaurants if you prefer something more familiar! Food is very good value in Japan, despite what you may have heard! You can easily find good quality lunches for £5 and dinner for just £10. Dining in hotels or more exclusive restaurants can be much more expensive but in general you will get much better quality for your money than in the UK.

We have included a brief guide to the most popular Japanese dishes. If you have a particular dietary concern, please contact us.

Single Supplements

We understand that single supplements are a considerable extra cost. Most of the hotels we use do not have smaller 'single' rooms due to their high standards so the accommodation costs are almost double but you can expect the same high standards as those sharing rooms.

Group Leaders

In most cases, you are joined by a member of our Japan staff on arrival who is your tour leader throughout your stay. We also use the services of local guides so there are generally two members of staff with you at each location.



Popular Japanese dishes

Sukiyaki is prepared at your table in a bubbling pot by cooking thinly sliced beef with vegetables, tofu and noodles



Tempura is fish, seafood & vegetables coated in a very light and crisp batter, deep fried in vegetable oil.



Sushi is exquisitely prepared fish or seafood placed on a ball of specially seasoned, sticky rice. A few non-seafood options are usually available



Sashimi is super fresh, delicately sliced fish eaten raw with soy sauce and fiery wasabi.



Kaiseki Ryori is regarded as the most exquisite culinary refinement in Japan. The dishes are mainly composed of vegetables, fish, seaweed and mushroom flavours and the presentation is truly a work of art.



Yakitori is small pieces of seasoned chicken or other meat and vegetables, cooked on skewers over a charcoal grill.



Tonkatsu is a crispy crumbed pork cutlet, fried and usually served with a distinctive, fragrant sauce and salad.



Shabu-shabu is a communal dining experience – using your chopsticks, fine slices of beef and vegetables are swirled in a pot of bubbling water, then dipped in a special sauce.



Soba and Udon are two kinds of Japanese noodle. Soba is made from buckwheat flour and Udon from wheat flour. They are served either in a soup or a sauce and are available in hundreds of delicious variations.



Luggage

Your luggage is couriered between hotels so you need only carry a small bag during your trip. When moving on to the next location, you either prepare your suitcase the day before or in the morning before breakfast and leave it in your room. It will be sent to the next hotel and will be available for you after dinner. Carrying luggage on trains can be difficult in Japan where storage space and lift access is limited. Surprisingly, luggage forwarding services are not included on many tours but we view this as a basic requirement for a relaxing tour!

Laundry

Most hotels offer a laundry service which is very straightforward to use as we stay at least two nights in each location. The cost for laundry services is similar to hotels in the west and can be quite expensive.

Health Advice

There are no particular health or immunisation requirements for travel to Japan. However, it is worth noting that the flight is quite long usually about 11-12 hours. Our scheduled tours are intended to be relaxing and enjoyable with a few hours of free time each day before dinner. We stay for at least two nights in each location so you can easily take a day to yourself if you want to rest and recover from jet lag. Our tours are specifically designed for people who enjoy a relaxed holiday avoiding anything too physically demanding!

Climate and clothing

All scheduled tours are in the spring and autumn when the climate is very pleasant. The latitude is further south than the UK so the sun is quite warm (similar to Spain) and afternoons are generally sunny. You do not necessarily need formal clothes and it is perfectly acceptable to bring comfortable, casual clothes for your entire stay as there are no religious or cultural taboos regarding dress. Mornings and evenings can be colder especially in March and November and we would recommend bringing some warmer clothes. Rain is not common in spring or autumn but a light raincoat or fold-up umbrella is a sensible addition to your day-bag. All such clothing and equipment can be bought easily and cheaply in Japan, although the sizes are small, have a slightly different cut and large sizes are quite rare.

Ryokan

Our scheduled tours include a two-night stay at a Ryokan and this is one of the special Japanese experiences that most people will treasure. However, sleeping on a futon on the floor may be a concern to some people but we would like to reassure you that Japanese futons are softer than those sold in the UK. They are placed on special tatami mats for extra cushioning rather than the rigid wooden frames often used in Britain. The overall affect is similar to harder western bed. If you remain unconvinced, we can usually arrange alternative western style accommodation nearby.

Meals are taken sat at low tables on the floor but back supports can usually be supplied to make it easier. We may be able to arrange alternatives if this is going to be particularly difficult for you and if you have any other concerns regarding the stay in a Ryokan, please feel free to discuss it with us.

Bathing and Bathrooms

Japanese hi-tech bathrooms are slightly different to British versions and sometimes include reheating baths, digital temperature control pads and heated loo seats! In general, bathing is very thorough, typically including a vigorous shower before stepping into a hot bath. Baths are shorter but much deeper and very relaxing. In addition to standard facilities, some hotels and ryokan offer traditional communal bathing in large hot pools an experience not to be missed if once you get used to the idea! Traditional Japanese WCs are also somewhat different but there is usually a combination of Japanese and British styles in most places.

UK connections and flight upgrades

We will advise you about flights, depending on your preferred class of travel, departure airport and airline. British Airways, All Nippon Airways, Japan Airlines and Virgin Atlantic fly direct from Heathrow to Tokyo with connections on to Osaka. If you wish to depart from Edinburgh or Manchester then Air France, Lufthansa and other European airlines can be good options. We will happily arrange a separate airport meeting and escort for you if required. You are not restricted by group flights in any way.



Why choose our group tours?

At Into Japan Specialist Tours, our staff have lived in Japan for an average of ten years. We speak the language and are fascinated by the culture. Japan is an enthralling country with a long history, and we pride ourselves on continuous learning. We are delighted to conduct research in order to meet specialised or unusual requests. We believe that our expertise, experience, and enthusiasm make us the leading choice amongst Japan tour operators.

Our specialised knowledge allows us to plan unique, theme-based tours, taking in the very best of the country. From our spring and autumn luxury tours, which focus on Japan's highlights and include some of the country's best accommodation, to our samurai tour which visits off-the-beaten-track locations, accompanied by Michael Jay, who is only the second non-Japanese to ever hold a samurai rank.

We are also unique in that we have our own offices in Tokyo and Kyoto. Other tour operators work with external ground agents; with Into Japan your tour will be handled exclusively by us, from your first enquiry through the duration of your tour. Being accompanied by tour leaders who are our own experienced specialists means personal and professional service throughout your tour.

No other company can provide this level of quality personal service. With only one company involved, your holiday will be both smooth and efficient, giving you value for money and an enhanced experience in Japan.



What our clients say...

"The Luxury Japan Tour was just wonderful. Warren and I are so glad we booked this holiday, and we had a brilliant time. I have been looking forward to going to Japan for a long time now. And I must say that this holiday has been one of the highlights of my life. What could have been a daunting and highly stressful experience on our own, was turned into a highly relaxing and enjoyable one thanks to Into Japan. Warren and I have now gained knowledge and confidence to look forward to our next trip to Japan on our own. Many thanks to all of you for your help throughout".

"Amazing - from skiing in Hokkaido to roaming in Tokyo, everything went so smoothly – not one hitch. Japan is a fantastically interesting country and we learned a lot. The cherry blossoms were beautiful. Pity we didn't see Mt. Fuji who declined to reveal herself and remained "the veiled lady", but we did see Mt. Yotei in Hokkaido – a Fuji look-alike. Into Japan has made travelling so easy and everything was efficient and delightful... It was not an inexpensive trip but I would recommend Into Japan Specialist Tours to anyone wishing to go to Japan. From the picnic in the park in Okayama to the Ikebana class three of us attended, to the excellent Geisha theatre, we felt part of life in Japan, from tradition to contemporary".

"Megumi's sunny disposition and spontaneity make her the perfect "minder"! She was always happy to explain, helpful and resourceful, acting instantly to solve individual problems or meet someone's needs. Delightful. Into Japan has a pearl!"



"The trip exceeded our expectations, the best holiday we have ever had. Especially as we have been to Japan before. We would go again tomorrow, we didn't want to go home!"

"The tour was excellent. I really enjoyed myself and I had many experiences to bring home. The hotels were excellent, especially the Conrad. I could get used to this sort of luxury. The tour lived up to its "luxurious" description. I thought all the guides were top rate - knowledgeable without being dull, and happy to adjust to the vagaries of the weather. Some of the best bits came from informal parts of the programme."

"Excellent, very informative tour. The hotels were all excellent, and the ryokan in Yufuin was a good experience. The guides were all very helpful, and they were eager to share their love of Japan. Naomi was exceptional in her organisation, even when the weather was against her. She was also flexible with the itinerary when asked or was necessary. A truly memorable holiday."

"A most enjoyable tour. We liked the order of the tour – Old Kyoto, Hot springs, etc, and ending up in ultra-modern Tokyo. The accommodation was very good, especially the very nice onsen facilities in the Hakone hotel. The guides were very good, especially Nobu, who spoke of wartime Hiroshima most movingly."

Into Japan Specialist Tours Booking Conditions



Booking Conditions

Please read the following conditions carefully. All holidays are sold subject to these conditions and the information in our brochure and quotation.

Into Japan Specialist Tours is a trading name of Oxford International Exchange Ltd, whose administrative offices are at Wesley House, 7 High St, Kidlington OX5 2DH, UK. In these conditions Into Japan Specialist Tours is referred to as 'we', 'us' and 'our'. The person or persons named on the booking form are referred to as 'you' and 'your'. This contract and all matters arising out of it are governed by the laws of England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

1. Holiday Payment

(i) The deposit for all scheduled tours is £500 / US\$1,000 or 15% of the total price per person for all other holidays. Once we have received your deposit we will send you your confirmation which will confirm all details of the holiday and what is included in the price. Once this confirmation has been sent to you a contract will exist between you and us. You must check all details on the confirmation and contact us immediately if there is anything you believe to be incorrect.

(ii) The confirmation details will also state what balance is due on the holiday and when payment is to be made. The balance will be due 60 days before the departure date and if this is not received we reserve the right to cancel your booking and charge cancellation fees as detailed below. It is our company policy to send a reminder at this time but it is still your responsibility to pay the balance even if you do not receive the reminder. If for any reason you have informed us of an exceptional reason for delay in payment and we choose to retain your booking, you will be liable for the higher cancellation fees if you do not pay the balance as stated or cancel at a later date.

(iii) If a holiday is booked within 60 days of departure, full payment is required to confirm the booking.

2. Insurance

It is required that every person named on the booking form is fully covered by travel insurance for the purposes of this holiday. We must receive a copy of your policy cover note at least 60 days before departure.

We highly recommend that you take out travel insurance that will cover cancellation costs of your holiday due to unforeseen circumstances.

3. If you change your holiday

If you request any changes to your booking after we have issued confirmation you may be liable for any costs including administration and/or cancellation fees that arise from the changes. We will do our best to accommodate your changes and we will do our best to avoid any additional costs. Please note that misspelled names can require flights to be rebooked and up to 100% cancellation fees applied to the original booking.

4. If you cancel your holiday before departure

If any person named on the booking form cancels their holiday the cancellation fees below will apply. Cancellation can only be accepted when confirmed in writing. The date this confirmation is received will be taken to be the cancellation date. We can accept signed faxes provided the original is posted to us immediately. The cancellation costs can be covered in many cases by appropriate travel insurance.

Cancellation charge per person based on number of days before departure when written confirmation of cancellation is received at our office.

More than 60 days: Deposit only

59-43 days: 30%

42-29 days: 60%

28-8 days: 80%

Within 7 days: 100%

5. Alterations or cancellations by you after departure

In general we are unable to make any refunds for unused portions of the holiday. We strongly recommend that adequate travel insurance is taken out that will cover all possible unforeseeable situations. If changes requested by you result in additional charges then these charges will be passed on to you. In particular, if special assistance is needed from our Japan office due to an emergency situation then you will be liable for additional costs (although these may be covered by your travel insurance).

6. If we change your holiday

All aspects of your holiday are normally arranged several months in advance but occasionally changes are unavoidable as we rely on our suppliers in Japan. We reserve the right to make minor changes as defined below. We will only cancel your holiday less than 60 days before departure if you have not complied with the booking conditions as described or if we have no choice as a result of 'force-majeure' as described below. Minor changes include change in order of schedule (without changing the contents), change to named hotel (without decreasing the standard or changing the type of accommodation), changing mode of transport (without changing the main schedule).

Major changes include change to contents of schedule (such as location change), change to flight departure or arrival date, decrease in standard or change of type of accommodation.

If a major change is made to the holiday we will inform you as soon as possible and you will have the choice to accept the change, cancel the holiday booked and book an alternative holiday (a balance may be due but we will not charge you for an increase in price on the same holiday schedule), or cancel the holiday booked and receive a full refund. You will have 10 days from the date we inform you to confirm your decision. If a major change results in reduced costs (for example a lower standard of hotel) and you do not cancel the holiday then we will make a corresponding refund to you. In addition we will make a further £50 / US\$100 compensation payment to you.

Most holidays will give a minimum number and a maximum number of persons on the tour. If the minimum number of persons for a tour is not reached 60 days before departure we reserve the right to cancel the holiday. We may offer you alternative arrangements (such as the same schedule with a group escort in Japan but no escort from the UK) and you may choose to accept these arrangements if you wish.

If a major change is made to the holiday after departure we will do our best to compensate you during the tour, either financially or through additional services. If a major change is as a result of 'force-majeure' then we do our best to carry out the schedule as planned but we reserve the right to terminate a schedule early and return you to the point of departure. In both of these cases all refunds that we can obtain from suppliers will be passed on to you.

'Force majeure' means any event (man-made or natural) which is out of the control of us and our suppliers can avoid during normal planning and preparation. This would include earthquakes, extreme weather, fire, technical problems with transport, operational decisions of air carriers, actual or threatened terrorist activity, industrial action and any similar events.

7. Surcharges

If there are any surcharges to be made you will be notified at least 60 days before departure. We will not make any additional charges whatsoever after that. The only possible reasons for a price surcharge are as follows:

(i) A change in the yen - pound exchange rate. You will only be asked to pay a surcharge in exceptional circumstances. There will only be a surcharge if the actual rate changes by more than 10% after the tour price is published/quoted. Should the exchange rate surcharge represent more than 10% of the original tour cost you will have the right to cancel and receive a full refund with 14 days of receiving notification.

(ii) A new tax or duty is imposed by the airline or government. This would normally be due to fluctuations in oil prices.

8. Our responsibilities

We will carry out the holiday as advertised and described to the best of our ability. We will accept responsibility for all the actions of our staff and suppliers when carrying out their work during the tour. We will not accept responsibility if injury, death, illness, damage or loss is the result of

(i) your actions

(ii) the actions of a third party not related to part of the described schedule of the tour

(iii) an event which we and our suppliers could not foresee

(iv) the actions of any other member of the tour group

(v) any health or condition which was not informed to us at the time of booking

(vi) additional services (for example, those that may be supplied by hotels) which are not included as part of the tour price

(vii) excursions not detailed in the tour schedule (although these may be introduced to you by our staff).

These are taken at your own risk and your contract is directly with the operator of these excursions.

If you are not happy with any aspect of the tour it is your responsibility to make it known to the group escort or our Japan or UK office as soon as is reasonably possible and during the tour whenever possible. We will discuss the situation with you, and then endeavour to deal with the complaint at the time and request feedback from you. If you do not report a problem, which can be dealt with at the time, we cannot accept any associated liability at a later date. Tour escorts and our offices will keep logs of such reports during tours and these will be referred to when dealing with claims. If you are still not happy after the end of the tour and wish to make a claim you must write to us within 30 days of your return with full details of your complaint. If your claim is our responsibility and your travel insurance processes the claim but there is an excess, we will pay the excess due.

Claims related to transport or accommodation will be limited to the maximum amount of compensation for which we are liable under the international convention or regulation which would normally apply. We are entitled to deduct from this amount and compensation given by the supplier in question. There may also be claims for which we have no liability according to the international convention or regulation.

You must assist us in dealing with any claims, transfer any rights against suppliers to us if requested and cooperate with us or our insurers in enforcing these rights. For further details please refer to the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992.

9. Your responsibilities

The flight details shown on original booking confirmation are subject to change. Final details will be confirmed on your travel documentation, sent approximately 14 days prior to departure. Any such change will not entitle you to cancel or change other arrangements without paying our normal charges unless the departure or arrival time has changed by more than 12 hours, or a non-stop flight has changed to a flight that is not non-stop.

The company can accept no responsibility for clients who arrive later than 2 hours prior to check in and miss their flight as a result nor can we accept responsibility for any loss by you of your holiday/flight travel tickets, vouchers or coupons. We cannot accept liability for any delay related to air travel unless it has a material effect on your holiday arrangements.

During the tour you will follow the directions and instructions of the group leader without reserve or hesitation at all times. You will also behave in an appropriate fashion which does not lead to possible damage, danger or annoyance to property or people. If, in our view, this is not the case we will have the right to terminate your contract with immediate effect without any further obligations to you in respect of covering any expenses, compensation, refunds, or arranging for your return home.

You accept responsibility for any damage or loss caused by you or any member of your party. Full payment for any damage or loss must be paid direct at the time to the accommodation owner or manager or other supplier. Otherwise you will be liable for any later claims against us (including any legal costs) which are due to your actions. You must prepare all the necessary valid travel documents including full passports, visas, vaccination certificates, currency and traveler's cheques. You must check the name on your airline tickets is exactly the same as the name that appears on your full passport. We cannot be liable for your entry refusal into Japan and if this is due to invalid documents you will be liable for any financial penalty to us.

10. The brochure details and quotations

We reserve the right to change the prices, services or other particulars contained in this brochure or any quotation at any time before we enter into a contract with you.

We will notify you of any change before entering a contract. Additional tour information, hotel information and schedules can be taken to be part of the contract.

Note that hotel classifications are subjective as there is no international standard. You must check all details of your chosen holiday (including the price) with us at the time of booking and on your booking confirmation.

11. Dealing with special requests

If you have any special request, you must advise us in writing at the time of booking. We cannot guarantee any request will be met unless we have specifically confirmed this in writing. Note we may also confirm a special request has been received without confirming that it is possible.

If you or any member of your party has any medical problem or disability which may affect your holiday or any other members in the group, you must tell us at the time a booking request is made. Otherwise we reserve the right to cancel your booking or curtail your holiday as described under your responsibility above.

12. Your holiday protection

For our flight inclusive packages departing from the UK we are licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL number 6977 and you will be fully covered under the terms of the license for our holidays. For non-flight inclusive packages you are protected by our TOPP policy.

Total Payment Protection (topp) Policy cover:

In compliance with the UK Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 and the Civil Aviation (Air Travel Organiser's Licensing) Regulations 1995 an insurance policy has been arranged with Travel & General Insurance Company plc, authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority, to protect customers' prepayments in the unlikely event of our financial failure and paid in respect of:

- non-flight inclusive packages commencing and returning to the UK
 - flight inclusive packages, where the initial flight from your home country, which is outside of the UK, was included in the package price of the holiday
 - the ground handling aspects of packages where the customer is responsible for arranging travel to the destination offered in this brochure/literature/document/on this website (subject to the terms of the insurance policy), for:
 - a refund of such prepayments if customers have not yet travelled, or
 - making arrangements to enable the holiday to continue if customers have already travelled, or
 - repatriation of customers to the UK or their home country as may be applicable.
- Customers' prepayments are protected by a top policy. In the unlikely event of financial failure please contact the claims helpline on 0870 0137 945. A copy of the policy is available on request.

13. Personal information and images

We will pass your personal information to suppliers as necessary for the planning and the operation of the tour. Your personal information will not be passed on to a third party for any other purpose. Any photographs or video taken during the tour may be used for our own promotional materials both in print and on our website. They will not be used for any other purpose.

These booking conditions were revised in January 2009 and are valid until December 31st 2012.
Registered Address: Wesley House, 7 High St, Kidlington OX5 2DH, UK Company Reg. No. 3819860