

Arupusu - The Alps of Japan
11 days – 10 nights
Tokyo, Matsumoto, Takayama, Kyoto, Hakone, Mt. Fuji
Discovery, Culture, History

This program may be operated for individuals or for groups
This is a suggested itinerary – Please call us to customize

The Japanese Alps offer a beautiful natural setting that changes with the seasons. A popular tourist destination for city dwellers in search of fresh air and cool climate, they also attract foreign visitors looking for breathtaking scenery and historical heritage. Professional mountaineer, the English missionary Walter Weston introduces this extreme sport to the Japanese and made known to the Western world at the end of the nineteenth century, the existence of these mountains with alpine accents. Recognizing, the country celebrates its memory every spring at the opening of the season of mountaineering in Japan.

Day 1: Tokyo

On arrival at either Narita or Haneda Airport, you will be met by your driver who will assist you with the shared transfer to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

One of the World's most cutting-edge capitals, Tokyo is a city of contrasts. Famous for its cutting-edge modernity, neon-lit landscape and towering skyscrapers, it is also home to sprawling parkland, peaceful shrines and temples and lovingly tended gardens. Despite its love affair with manga pop culture, fashion, high-tech trends and conspicuous consumption, below the surface is a city that has its roots in an ancient heritage. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples stand close to skyscrapers as a reminder of a more contemplative time and at the heart of the hyperactive centre lies the serene Imperial Palace, the home of the ruling emperor that provides a tangible link to the city's historical past. Behind the shopping, entertainment and commercial emporia can be found quaint wooden houses, private gardens with meticulously clipped bonsai trees and the Zen-like calm of the Hamarikyu Gardens. The city's reputation as a mega-expensive metropolis is ill conceived and visitors can take advantage of inexpensive izakaya bars and neighborhood cafes that serve delicious noodles and rice dishes.

Day 2: Tokyo

Take a day tour of this fascinating city with a local guide, making use of Tokyo's comprehensive and user-friendly public transport system. The day begins with a visit to Meiji Shrine, a shrine dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings. Take a walk down Omotesando shopping street, a broad tree lined avenue home to the flagship stores of the world's top fashion brands.

Head across town to Asakusa, Tokyo's old town where you can soak in the atmosphere of the Tokyo of old. Visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple and wander down Nakamise, a shopping street that has been providing temple visitors with a variety of traditional, local snacks and tourist souvenirs for centuries. Take a boat cruise on the Sumida River passing under 12 bridges. Disembark in Hamarikyu garden, an Edo Period Japanese garden surrounded by the Shiodome district's futuristic skyscrapers, a great example of how Japan is the land of contrasts, where you will stop for a cup of steaming matcha and Japanese sweets in a tea house on a small island in the park's lake. [B]

Day 3: Tokyo, Matsumoto

Ride the train to Matsumoto (3hrs) using the included JR Pass. You will have free time to visit Matsumoto castle and explore the surrounding town, including Nakamachi, a former merchant district full of preserved warehouses turned into restaurants, cafes and shops. We also recommend the Japan Ukiyoe Museum is home to over 100,000 of these famous Japanese woodblock prints, making it one of the world's largest private art collections. [B]

Located 3 hours from Tokyo, Matsumoto has flourished as a castle town since the 16th century. In addition to its historical and cultural heritage Matsumoto is surrounded by mountains and is acclaimed for its beautiful views. Hiking and climbing locations in the mountains are readily accessible by local bus transportation. To the west the Japan Alps rise to heights of 3,000 meters, and are known as "The Roof of Japan".

Day 4: Matsumoto

Today there are no planned activities.

You may choose to continue exploring Matsumoto, or make the below suggested day trip. Your day is self-guided. [B]

Day Trip Suggestion – Snow Monkeys and Nagano (self-guided)

This morning you can choose to head to Nagano to visit historic Zenkoji temple.

One of the most visited temples in Japan, Zenkoji was founded 1400 years ago and stores, what many believe to be the first Buddhist statue ever brought to Japan. Most recently rebuilt in 1707, Zenkoji's main hall has a tunnel in its basement in which visitors are trying to find and touch the "key to paradise" in complete darkness. The key is attached to the wall and grants enlightenment to anybody who touches it. After visiting Zenkoji, continue on by train and bus (not covered by your JR Pass, to be paid on the spot) to visit Jigokudani Park to see the famous Snow Monkeys.

Jigokudani literally means 'hell's valley' due to the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the frozen ground, and it is in the baths of this boiling water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak in on. The monkeys live in large social groups, and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions. Accustomed to humans, they can be observed from very close and almost completely ignore their human guests. Whilst the monkeys are most numerous during the colder months, they can be observed all year round.

Day 5: Matsumoto, Takayama

Travel by coach to Takayama. This afternoon we recommend visiting one of the town's many sake breweries for a taste of the local drop, its high quality due to the area's clean water sources. Tonight you will stay in Japanese style ryokan accommodation with hot spring onsen bath. [B/D]

With its plethora of temples, shrines, festivals, rivers and bridges the mountain town of Takayama has been called a "little Kyoto". The region is an agricultural one, and every day the freshest of vegetables and fruit are brought by local farmers to Takayama's lively morning market. Many unique traditions have evolved here, and due to the town's previously inaccessible location high in the Hida alpine region, a remarkable number of them have been preserved. The district called San-machi Suji, the traditional home of Takayama merchants and sake brewers, has been preserved in almost exactly the same state as 200 or 300 years ago. Here, are inns, shops and taverns which trace their history back many generations.

Day 6: Takayama (Shirakawago)

Your day is self-guided. This is our suggestion on how to spend it: After breakfast you may head up to the Miyagawa morning market with stalls selling local crafts and produce. This is a great opportunity to try some of the region's delicious fruit and vegetables. A short bus ride will take you to Hida No Sato Folk Village, an open air museum exhibiting over 30 typical farmhouses and other traditional buildings from the Hida region. There is also a workshop in the village illustrating how many of Japan's famous handicrafts are made, including woodcarving, tie-dying, weaving, and lacquering. In the afternoon you can visit the Takayama Festival Floats museum, displaying floats from the famous Takayama festival, or simply wander through the beautifully preserved old town. You can also make a half-day trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Shirakawago village, famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. Gassho-zukuri translates as 'Praying Hands', as the farmhouses' steep thatched roofs resemble the hands of Buddhist monks pressed together in prayer, and are designed to withstand the heavy snows which fall in the region. Busses depart frequently from Takayama Bus Terminal (ticket to be paid on the spot – not covered by JR Pass). [B/D]

Day 7: Takayama, Kyoto

Travel by train to Kyoto (3hrs) using your JR Pass. Japanese cuisine has such high reputation that it was declared UNESCO Intangible World Heritage. This afternoon you will try your hand at making some of the dishes that made this cuisine so popular in the world. This class is a great way to immerse yourself in Japanese dining culture as well as learn authentic and popular Japanese foods that are eaten at home and in local restaurants. The course consists of two parts. First, you will cook 2~3 dishes and enjoy them. Then you will return to the kitchen and learn 2~3 more dishes before eating once more. Enjoy cooking and eating a variety of dishes in cozy atmosphere just like in Izakaya restaurants (Japanese style pubs)! You will be making your own way to and from the cooking class. [B/D]

This is a must-see destination in Japan. Kyoto is the nation's former capital and was the residence of the emperor from 794 until 1868. It is Japan's seventh largest metropolis with a population of around 1.4 million and a city of culture that offers a plethora of temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures that still survive today. With 2,000 religious buildings, including 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, as well as palaces, gardens and associated architecture, it is one of the best preserved cities in Japan and has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. Kyoto represents the "Japan of old" and beyond the high-rise skyscrapers built as a monument to progress, the real monument to Japan's historical and cultural past can be found in the city's narrow alleyways where tea houses abound and kimono-clad geisha hurry from elegant function to function. This is a place to go back in time to Japan's mysterious past where echoes of the court nobility resonate at the Imperial Palace and the search for contemplation can be found in Ryoanji's Zen rock gardens.

Day 8: Kyoto

Today you explore the former imperial capital with a knowledgeable local guide, utilizing Kyoto's comprehensive bus system to visit some of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites. You will start your day with a visit to Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun. After his death it became a Buddhist Temple at his request, and is now one of Kyoto's most famous temples. Nijo Castle is an ornamental castle was built by the founder of the Edo Shogunate as his Kyoto residence and is surrounded by stunning surrounding gardens. The main building was completed in 1603, and is famous for its architecture, decorated sliding doors and 'chirping' nightingale floors. Take a walk down Nishiki Market, a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. Known as "Kyoto's Kitchen", this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi. Final stop today is Kiyomizu (Pure Water) Temple. From the 13m high veranda jutting out from the Main Hall you can enjoy amazing views of the whole of Kyoto, whilst pondering the fact that both the Main Hall and Veranda were built without the use of nails or any kind of joiners. [B]

Day 9: Kyoto, Hakone/Mt Fuji

Take Japan's world-famous Shinkansen bullet train to Hakone (2hr) using your JR Pass. Armed with your Hakone Free Pass, take advantage of the extensive local transport network to explore this stunning region. From switchback trains to cable cars, ropeways to buses and even a pirate ship that will sweep you across the volcanic Lake Ashi with views of Mt Fuji. Tonight you will stay in a Japanese traditional ryokan, sleeping on futons laid out on tatami mats with delicious included meals and piping hot onsen (hot spring) baths. [B/D]

Hakone is a natural nature wonderland and is famous for its hot springs, outdoor pursuits and the view of the nearby Mount Fuji. It is part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park and is less than 100-km from Tokyo, thereby providing a popular weekend destination for city residents keen to escape the frenzy of the capital. Beautiful Hakone has about everything a vacationer could wish for. Besides the towering mountains, lakes and views of Mount Fuji, it is also blessed with interesting historical sites. You can tour Hakone as a day trip if you leave early enough in the morning and limit your sightseeing to a few key attractions, but adding an overnight stay, including a soak in a hot-spring tub, is definitely recommended.

Day 10: Hakone, Tokyo

Take the aptly named Romance Car train back to Tokyo (1.5hrs). You will then enjoy free time at leisure. [B]

Option [1]: Old Tokyo walking tour

This afternoon, explore Tokyo's shitamachi (downtown). Our image of Tokyo is usually that of a super-modern metropolis but suburbs like Yanaka, which was miraculously spared the carnage of the Allied bombings in World War II, still preserve a nostalgic atmosphere. Part of its charm today lies in this sense of being hidden. Visit old temples and shrines, one of Tokyo's oldest Buddhist cemeteries as well as

traditional shops selling Japanese paper and sweets, and soak in the atmosphere of pre-war Tokyo. Take a look at what life in this area used to be like in the Shitamachi Museum, located in Ueno Park. One of the most popular parks for hanami (cherry blossom parties) in Tokyo, Ueno Park was originally part of Kaneiji Temple, which used to be one of the city's largest and wealthiest temples and a family temple of the ruling Tokugawa clan during the Edo Period. Your guide will take you on a stroll to show you the many attractions that enrich this large park. Last stop for the day is Ueno's Ameyoko-cho, a busy market street underneath the train lines. Originally the site of a black market after World War Two, this bustling market is the last of its kind in Tokyo, and is filled with shops and stalls selling various products such as fresh fish, dried food and spices. At one of the many open air restaurants under the train tracks, you can stop for a cold drink and a yakitori (grilled chicken skewer).



Day 11: Tokyo, USA

The day is at leisure until your included transfer to the airport. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner

Tour Price Includes:

- Arrival and departure transfers
- 10 nights' accommodation at chosen hotels:
 - Tokyo – 3 nights
 - Matsumoto – 2 nights
 - Takayama – 2 night
 - Kyoto – 2 nights
 - Hakone – 1 night
- Meals
 - Daily breakfast
 - 4 dinners
- Japan Rail Pass valid 7 days in ordinary class, to use from days 2 to 8
- Hakone Free Pass valid 2 days, to use on days 9 and 10
- Private full day tour of Tokyo including entrance fees
- Coach ticket Matsumoto – Takayama

- Cooking lesson (food cooked during the lesson) – reach the cooking class venue on own
- Private full day tour of Kyoto including entrance fees
- Romance car train ticket Hakone Yumoto – Shinjuku, reserved seat

Tour does not include:

- International airfare, taxes and fees
- Meals or drinks other than specified as included
- Japan Visa processing and issuing visa fee
- Travel Insurance
- Expenses of a personal nature (minibar, phone call, laundry, etc.),
- Tips to guides/drivers/porters, etc.
- Entrance fees for any extra sightseeing
- Optional activities

Recommended Hotels in tour:

City	Hotel Name	Room Type	Tripadvisor
First Class			
Tokyo	Park Hotel	City	4.5
Matsumoto	Buena Vista Matsumoto	Executive	4
Takayama*	Honjin Hiranoya Bekkan	Standard Japanese	4.5
Kyoto	Daiwa Royal Hotel Grande	Deluxe	4
Hakone*	Yutorelo An Ryokan	Standard Japanese	3.5
Deluxe			
Tokyo	The Prince Park Tower	Deluxe	4.5
Matsumoto	Matsumoto Marunouchi	Deluxe	4.5
Takayama*	Koto no Yume	Standard Japanese	4.5
Kyoto	Four Seasons	Premier	4.5
Hakone*	Gora Sounkaku Ryokan	Standard Japanese	4

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

*** Note:** As ryokans do not usually offer single rooms, for single travelers we might have to offer western style accommodation (still including dinner and hot springs)

Tour Prices:

These programs can be customized for individuals and groups. Changes to this program may be requested by phone (1-855-55-TOURS) or using the web FIT Quote Request

• **Airfare**

We also be glad to add the necessary airfare from your gateway so you take advantage of our special discounted leisure fares

• **Program**

You may add or remove;

- Trip days
- Cities and sites
- Meals

• **Other options**

- The program was designed with private services, however, we may substitute shared sightseeing where available
- If you prefer deluxe services we may operate this program including private driver, private guide and concierge service.

• **Quotation**

Once we have designed the program the way you want we'll give you a quote within 2 business days.

Tour Code: JP03TYO20TE

Options:

- Lunches and dinners can be arranged for individuals, families and groups at top restaurants or any restaurant requested by you.
- We can revise the itinerary to spend more time and provide more depth in those areas that you are interested on.
- Any other changes to the itinerary will be accommodated depending on the facilities available in the area.

Group Quotations

- If you wish to use these programs for your group or as the basis for a customized journey please

either call us (1-855-55-TOURS or use the web Group Quote Request.

- In either case our specialists will work with to refine all the details and they will get you a quote with 2 business days. Quotes may be obtained for the air and land portions of just for the land journey.
- Booking both air and land with us will represent savings for you because of our buying power and longtime relationship with the airlines.
- We will also may have the choice between regular fares and special leisure fares not available to the public.