

# Japan: Kyoto, the Japanese Alps & Tokyo

Pre-departure information for your tour



## Passport, Visa & Entry Requirements

- In order to enter Japan, U.S. and Canadian citizens need a valid passport with an expiration date extending at least six months beyond the date of reentry.
- We recommend having at least two blank passport pages for entry stamps.
- If you are not a U.S. or Canadian citizen, you must contact Japan's consulate for your specific entry requirements.
- You can see the most up-to-date entry requirements for the destination(s) you'll visit on tour by going to [goaheadtours.com/entry-requirements](https://goaheadtours.com/entry-requirements) and searching the code JAG.

## Arrival & Departure Information

- Round-trip flights booked through Go Ahead Tours arrive in Osaka and depart from Tokyo.
- Transfers to and from the airport at your destination are included for travelers who have purchased their flights through Go Ahead Tours. Travelers who purchase their own flights may request airport transfers with Go Ahead Tours for an additional cost if they are arriving or departing on the standard day.
- When you arrive in Osaka, a Go Ahead representative will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall with a Go Ahead sign or a sign with your name(s). If you don't see a representative immediately, please be patient and stay in the arrivals area. They may be assisting another traveler who has also just arrived and will be back shortly.

## Transportation on Tour

- This tour includes various modes of transportation, including trains and private motor coach. Some modes of transportation will have raised platforms or steps and often not provide access to ramps or lifts.
- Train rides from Osaka to Hiroshima, Kyoto to Kanazawa, and Kanazawa to Tokyo are included in the price of your tour. (The tour extension also includes a round-trip flight between Tokyo and Okinawa.)
- All other included transportation on this tour is by private motor coach.

- Japanese train stations typically operate similarly to airports where security measures, such as baggage and body scanners, are common. Platforms are often spread out across large distances and require travelers to manage their luggage on escalators or stairs. Porterage services are not offered on train transfers and luggage storage on trains is extremely limited. Please keep in mind that trains may only be stopping at the stations for a few minutes; speed with loading and unloading may be imperative.

## Baggage Allowance & Expectations

- Please note that our travelers are limited to one checked bag and one carry-on bag per person due to storage limitations on motor coaches and trains.
- Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to exceed baggage size and weight restrictions. Be advised that you are responsible for any baggage fees incurred on all flights.
- Contact your airline(s) for baggage size and weight restrictions for your flights.
- Make sure you label your baggage and keep valuables, medication, and documents in your carry-on bag.
- Travelers must manage their own luggage throughout tour as porters are not guaranteed. This includes at hotels, airports, and boarding trains.
- Luggage storage on trains is extremely limited, and only hand luggage is allowed. Larger luggage will be shipped to each hotel and typically arrives the following day so an overnight bag is recommended.

## Clothing & Packing Tips

- We recommend packing lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that can be easily layered to accommodate varying temperatures, as well as a light jacket or rainwear.
- A sturdy pair of walking shoes or sneakers is recommended for sightseeing.
- You may want to pack dressier attire if you plan to visit a high-end restaurant or attend a special performance.
- It is preferable not to visit temples or other religious sites with bare legs and shoulders

(and entrance may be denied on this basis).

- We recommend packing your Insurance Card (from your primary insurance provider) in your carry on luggage.

## Meals & Cuisine

- This tour includes five dinners. Included meals may be plated set menus, buffet or family style depending on the location. Dinners include one glass of beer, wine, or soft drink and water, coffee and tea.
- Breakfast each morning is also included at the hotel and is typically buffet style with hot and cold options.
- Most Japanese meals are based around rice or noodles with fish, meat, and vegetables flavored with soy sauce and miso. You may recognize popular dishes like sushi, tempura, and hot pot.
- In Tokyo, you'll find regional dishes from all over the country as well as international cuisine throughout the city. Popular dishes in Tokyo are nigiri sushi, Chanko Nabe hot pot (a favorite of sumo wrestlers), and Monjayaki—a delicious griddled pancake made with seafood, meat, and cabbage.
- You'll find rich culinary history in Kyoto ranging from fine-dining kaiseki dinners where the chef's plating skills are on full display, or simple and traditional home-style meals which are referred to as obanzai ryori. Be sure not to miss the Nishiki Market, known as Kyoto's Kitchen, you'll find over one hundred stalls offering local produce and tasty snacks.
- Local foods are Hiroshima's specialty such as their Okonomiyaki dish—a savory pancake which is layered with several toppings and placed on yakisoba noodles. You'll also find the cold noodle dish Tantanmen where you can choose your spice level and add toppings like sliced meats, eggs, and vegetables.
- In the Japanese Alps, you'll find some of the country's best soba noodles which are served in a variety of dishes. Beautifully marbled Hida Beef out of the Gifu Prefecture can be found throughout the Alps region as well as mountain vegetables, Buddhist cuisine, and traditional Japanese sweets.

## Tipping

- At the conclusion of your tour, it is customary to offer your Tour Director and driver a gratuity in local currency. Please keep current exchange rates in mind.
- We recommend tipping the equivalent of \$10-\$12USD per person per day for your Tour Director and the equivalent of \$3USD per person per day for your driver.
- If applicable, we also recommend the equivalent of \$2USD per local guide.
- Tips can only be paid in cash.
- The cost of portage is included in your tour price, and it is not necessary to tip baggage handlers.

## Currency

- You will use the Japanese yen on tour.
- Better rates of exchange are usually available overseas, although it's worth ordering some currency from your local bank to use when you first arrive.
- We strongly advise that you take debit/bank cards and credit cards, which can be used to withdraw cash at local banks as needed.
- You can use most debit/credit cards at ATMs on the international networks Cirrus and Plus, but make sure to check with your home bank about withdrawal fees.
- International banks and businesses primarily accept debit and credit cards that work with the EMV chip system. If you do not already have at least one debit or credit card with a chip in it, we strongly recommend requesting one from your bank prior to your tour.
- Plan ahead and bring cash to tip your tour director, local guides, and bus drivers. We also recommend keeping coins in the local currency on hand, as some public bathrooms may charge a fee for use.

## Responsible Travel

- When you travel with EF Go Ahead Tours, you'll make a positive impact on the places you visit, and the people and animals you meet along the way. That's because our three core Responsible Travel commitments—protecting the environment, supporting local communities, and

promoting animal welfare—are at the heart of every tour we offer.

- Travel, when done responsibly, can make an enormous socio-economic impact to communities. To maximize your impact, eat at locally owned restaurants and shop at local businesses. Ask your Tour Director to point out restaurants they recommend.
- Prepare for your trip: be aware of the monetary norms such as tipping and negotiating in a market, learn about the destination's forms of etiquette, and take some time to learn a few words in the local language.
- When interacting with locals, make sure to ask people for permission before you take their picture, and approach cultural differences with empathy and an open mind.
- EF Go Ahead Tours encourages our travelers to limit their waste while on the road, especially single use plastics. You can avoid single use plastics by packing your own toiletries, using electronic documents, and bringing a reusable water bottle and shopping bag. If you need to use plastics or paper, please recycle.
- Environment: When visiting national parks, reserves, or other protected areas, please do not remove anything from the natural environment or leave any litter. Carry out what you carried in.