



The ferry from Kagoshima to Sakurajima ©Kagoshima City

North and South Japan Hokkaido and Kyushu 4 – 16 October 2026



Level 4
ACTIVE





Lake Toya, Hokkaido

The four main islands of Japan – Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu – encompass enormous diversity in geography, culture and food. This diversity is at its richest between the thickly forested expanses of Hokkaido and the volcanic, subtropical island of Kyushu. If Japan was overlaid on Europe, Hokkaido would be in Scandinavia, with an almost Russian feel, while Kyushu would overlay Portugal.

Hokkaido is the Japan of wide-open spaces, with 20% of the country's land area but only 5% of its population. It is famous for its forests, bears, tropical-blue caldera lakes, fields of alpine wildflowers, delicious seafood and the indigenous culture of Japan's first people, the Ainu, who are still present in Hokkaido.

Kyushu is the southernmost of Japan's four main island, renowned for its tonkotsu ramen, natural

hot springs and peaceful beaches, dramatic mountains and volcanic terrain, with cultural influences from China and Korea that arrived via the Korean Peninsula.

Travel in autumn, when Hokkaido's leaves will be turning vivid hues, and Kyushu will still be experiencing warmer days and evenings. Learn about the rich history and distinctive local cuisines of both islands in the company of Japan expert, Jason James.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 4 | Active



Longer and fuller days. Significant levels of walking, covering longer distances, requiring very good fitness and mobility.

Tour Leader

Jason James OBE is Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation. Having been fascinated by Japan on a choir tour at the age of 13, he chose to read Japanese Studies at King's College, Cambridge, where he was a double scholar (academic and choral), graduating with a "starred first" (only the third time this accolade had ever been awarded by Cambridge's Japanese Department) in 1987. Subsequently he worked in the financial industry, mostly specialising in Japanese equities, becoming Head of Research in the Tokyo office of HSBC Securities, and eventually Head of Global Equity Strategy at HSBC in London.

From 2007-2011 Jason was Director of the British Council in Japan, during which time he also served as Chair of the European Union National Institutes of Culture Japan cluster, a Board Member of the Japan-British Society, and a Board Member of United World Colleges Japan. In London, in addition to his day job he was a Trustee of the Japan Society for six years, and a member of the Japan Season of Culture Action Committee. Jason is currently a member



of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group and a Governor of King's College School, Cambridge. Jason's interest in Japan is broad, covering the economy, financial markets and tax, as well as Japanese literature, art and history, and the relationship between the UK and Japan. Publications range from *'The Political Economy of Japanese Financial Markets'* (co-author, Macmillan 1999), to *'Edmund Blunden and Japan'* (Asiatic Society, 2010).

Jason received an OBE for services to UK/Japan relations in The King's Birthday Honours 2023. He is a popular and experienced tour leader to Japan.



Visit Yufuin Onsen en route from Nagasaki to Beppu, Kyushu

Itinerary: 4 – 16 October 2026

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

2 nights Hakodate – 3 nights Sapporo – 2 nights Nagasaki – 2 nights Beppu – 3 nights Kagoshima



Day 1: Hakodate, Hokkaido (Sun, 4 Oct) **D**

Am: Arrive in Hakodate, known for its beautiful views, historical sites and delicious seafood.

Pm: Visit Fort Goryokaku, a massive, star-shaped citadel surrounded by a moat, built late in the Edo Period (1603-1868) to defend Hakodate. Continue up to the wooded Mount Hakodate for the famous views of the peninsula as the sun goes down before a welcome dinner.

Day 2: Hakodate (Mon, 5 Oct) **B L**

Am: Walk to Hakodate Morning Market, with crabs grilling over hot coals, freshly caught squid packed in ice and the calls of vendors. Explore Hakodate Port, among the first in Japan to be opened to international trade towards the end of the feudal era.

Pm: Take the train to Onuma Quasi National Park, a stunning natural haven shaped by the eruptions of Mt. Komagatake.

Day 3: Hakodate / Sapporo **B D**

(Tues, 6 Oct)

Am: Drive to Lake Toya in Shikotsu-Toya National Park, featuring hot springs and the active volcano, Mount Usu.

Pm: Continue to Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, the most comprehensive museum of the indigenous Ainu from the Northern region of Japan, who still thrive in the region today. Drive to Sapporo.

Day 4: Sapporo (Wed, 7 Oct) **B L**

Am: Walking tour of Sapporo with public transport, including the Hokkaido University Botanical Garden and the Sapporo Beer Museum, with tastings. Watch sunset from JR Observation Tower.

Day 5: Sapporo (Thurs, 8, Oct) **B L**

Am: Drive to the historic port city of Otaru to see its well-preserved canal area, Old Aoyama Villa, and lovely Sakaimachi Street.

Pm: Visit Niki Hills Winery for lunch and a tour. On to Somoza, a beautiful gallery housed in a 150-year-old house nestling in a forest in Hanazono, with Japanese arts and crafts from antique to avant-garde. Finish the day at the Jozankei onsen area amidst stunning autumn colours.

Day 6: Sapporo / Fukuoka / Nagasaki, Kyushu (Fri, 9 Oct) **B D**

Am: Fly from Sapporo to Fukuoka.

Pm: Drive to Nagasaki and transfer to the hotel. Settle in before dinner.

Day 7: Nagasaki (Sat, 10 Oct) **B L**

Am: Guided walking tour of historic Dejima, a man-made island in the port of Nagasaki, once used to segregate Dutch residents from the Japanese population. Visit Glover House and Garden.

Pm: Take a cruise out to Gunkanjima, or Battleship Island, located off the coast. The island was once used as a coal mine, with over 5000 residents living in their 480m long, 150m wide island home, resulting in the highest population density ever recorded on earth. See the island from the water and by land, along walkways and observation decks.

Day 8: Nagasaki / Beppu (Sun, 11 Oct) B D

Am: Drive from Nagasaki to Beppu, visiting Yufuin Onsen en route.

Pm: Visit the 'Hells of Beppu,' hot spring sites for viewing only, ranging from boiling mud to vibrant cobalt-blue water. Option to visit the award-winning Hyotan Onsen with various baths fed by natural hot spring water.

Eve: Enjoy a jigoku-mushi dinner — food cooked using natural geothermal steam.

Day 9: Beppu (Mon, 12 Oct) B L

Am: Explore the Kunisaki Peninsula. Visit the samurai houses in Kitsuki, which retains its authentic atmosphere. Visit Ohara Samurai House and the museum and see Kitsuki Castle.

Pm: Explore the unique local religion of Rokugo Manzan, which contains elements of Buddhism, Shinto and mountain worship. Visit Fukiji Temple, Kyushu's oldest wooden structure. See the Kumano Magaibutsu Stone Buddha, the largest Buddhist stone carvings in Japan. Return via the 8th century Usa Shrine.

Day 10: Beppu / Kagoshima B D

(Tues, 13 Oct)

Am: Drive to Kagoshima, Kyushu's southernmost city. It was the former seat of one of Japan's most powerful feudal clans, the Shimazu, who played a central role in the Meiji Restoration.

Pm: Explore the city, including the mountain-top Shiroyama, formerly the castle site and also the site of the final battle of the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877. Visit the Iso Residence, the home of the Shimazu clan in the beautiful Senganen Gardens, and see sites relating to the early industrialisation and modernisation of Japan.

Day 11: Kagoshima (Wed, 14 Oct) B D

Am: Full day at leisure in Kagoshima. There is the option of a day trip by ferry to the nearby active volcano, Sakurajima (details overleaf).

Day 12: Kagoshima (Thurs, 15 Oct) B D

Am: Full day visit to the Satsuma Peninsula, including Chiran Peace Museum, which commemorates the young Tokko pilots, often known as "kamikaze" pilots during WWII. Continue to the Samurai District and visit Chiran Samurai House and Garden.

Eve: Farewell dinner.

Day 13: Kagoshima (Fri, 16 Oct) B

Am: Depart hotel after breakfast.

The historic port city of Otaru, Hokkaido





Sakurajima and Kagoshima ©Kagoshima Convention & Visitor's Bureau

Kagoshima and Sakurajima

Kagoshima is Kyushu's southernmost major city and the capital of Kagoshima Prefecture. Twinned with an Italian sister, Naples, the two cities share a mild climate, a lovely bay, palm tree-lined streets, and a nearby rumbling volcano. Just 15 minutes away by ferry, Mount Sakurajima is Kagoshima's Vesuvius.

Life in Sakurajima's shadow can be idyllic, with mango trees lining the seaside promenade and naturally heated footbaths, where people can take a break to soak their feet. Volcanic activity has created dramatic landscapes, with lush greenery, volcanic craters, and stunning views of the surrounding coastline. As well as its hot springs, Sakurajima also boasts the world's biggest radish, its smallest mandarin and uniquely coloured pottery, made using volcanic ash.

You can also spend the day in Kagoshima, which has the largest shopping district in south Kyushu (Tenmonkan, located downtown Kagoshima City) and much to offer in terms of food, including satsuma-age (deep-fried fish cake) and the "black trio" of wagyu beef, Berkshire pork, and Satsuma jidori chicken - the name is derived from the black colors of the animals used to make the dishes. Wagyu beef from Kagoshima is said to be the best in Japan.

Living in the volcano's shadow

Japan's most active volcano erupts hundreds of times a year. These regular eruptions are part of everyday life for people in Kagoshima, who use umbrellas on ash days and learn not to leave their clothes out at certain times of the year.

Sakurajima is very closely monitored with constant updates. Daily routines include children wearing helmets on the way to and from school to protect heads from volcanic debris, packing volcanic ash falling around houses into official "ash bags" for collection, and evacuation plans to designated shelters set up around the area in emergencies.



One of Sakurajima's naturally heated footbaths ©K.C.V.B.



Fort Goryokaku, Hakodate, Hokkaido (top); Vivid autumn colours in Sapporo, Hokkaido ©Sapporo Travel; Food culture in Kagoshima ©Kagoshima City; Jigenji Park, Kagoshima ©Kagoshima City (above)

The cost is £4,880 per person sharing a double or twin room

The cost with a room to yourself is £5,774

The cost of the tour includes:

- The services of a tour leader, Jason James
- 12 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium-grade and first-class hotels
- Breakfast daily
- Dinner or lunch daily
- All admission fees
- Services of English-speaking local guides in Hokkaido and Kyushu
- All transport services, tips and taxes in Japan
- Internal flight from Sapporo, Hokkaido to Fukuoka, Kyushu

The cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- Meals not mentioned
- Drinks with meals
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- All personal extras such as portage, laundry and inoculation fees
- Travel insurance
- Visa, if required

NB: All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.

'The outstanding feature of this tour was Jason – he was excellent.'

David J Langman, *Japan Historical and Contemporary*, November 2022

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Jon Baines Tours (London)
Hyde Park House, 5 Manfred Road,
London, SW15 2RS
Tel: +44 (0) 207 223 9485 / 5618

Jon Baines Tours (Melbourne)
PO Box 68, South Brunswick,
Victoria 3055
Tel: +61 (0) 3 9343 6367

Email: info@jonbainestours.com
www.jonbainestours.com



Onuma Quasi National Park, Hokkaido (top);
Traditional Ainu culture, Hokkaido; Gunkanjima, Nagasaki;
Yufuin Onsen near Beppu, Kyushu (above)



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