

The Daimon Gate, the ancient entrance to Mount Koya

Japan: Historical and Contemporary

24 October–3 November 2027

AITO
The Specialist Travel Association

JON BAINES TOURS

Level 3
MODERATE



A maiko in Kyoto

Japan is a blend of gracious tradition, exquisite ritual and hyper modernity. This itinerary follows Japan's long history from the earliest historical records and continues via the shoguns, the arrival of the black ships, the Meiji Restoration and the opening of Japan, to the modern day.

You will travel in exceptional company; this tour is led by Jason James OBE, Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, whose wide-ranging knowledge of Japanese culture encompasses the economy, literature, art, history, and the relationship between the UK and Japan. You will also be accompanied by our highly experienced Japanese National Guide, Coco.

The tour includes a range of specialist visits and experiences in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Hakone, the Izu Peninsula and Tokyo, illustrated by short talks throughout. Enjoy local cuisine and travel aboard one of Japan's highly efficient bullet trains, as autumn's fiery shades transform the landscape.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 3 | Moderate

Regular walking at destinations, extended standing and /or increased travel distances. Good fitness is required.

Tour Leader



Jason James 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, with publications ranging 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; he has led a number of successful tours to Japan.

Tsutenkaku tower in Osaka



Itinerary: 24 October–3 November 2027

B = Breakfast L = Lunch D = Dinner

2 nights Osaka – 3 nights Kyoto – 2 nights Mishima – 3 nights Tokyo



Day 1: Osaka (Sun, 24 Oct) D

Am Arrive in Osaka and check in to the hotel.

Eve Welcome dinner at a restaurant with drinks.

Day 2: Osaka (Mon, 25 Oct) B D

Am/Pm Travel up to Mount Koya to visit Okunoin, part of Kongobuji Temple, one of the most sacred places in Japan. Visit the cemetery containing important Japanese people through history and see some of the 100 temples on the mountain. Learn about the powerful 12th century samurai warrior Taira clan and hear a short talk by Jason James: *"Capitals, culture and conflict."*

Eve Okonomiyaki dinner.

Day 3: Osaka / Kyoto (Tues, 26 Oct) B L

Am Transfer to Yoshino, visit Kinpusen-ji Temple and walk up to the site of the Imperial residence of Go-Daigo and the other Southern Court Emperors.

Pm Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit Nara, Japan's 8th Century capital. Visit Todai-ji, one of the Seven Great Temples, which contains the world's largest bronze Buddha. Visit the important Shinto shrine of Kasuga Taisha before continuing to Kyoto. Talk: *"Kyoto art, culture and the imperial city."* Check in to the hotel. At leisure.

Day 4: Kyoto (Wed, 27 Oct) B D

Am Visit the beautiful seventeenth-century Nijo Castle with its moat, huge stone walls, stunning gardens and rich art collection. Visit the Golden Pavilion, where the top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf and explore the famous geisha district of Gion.

Pm At leisure or option of walking the Philosopher's Path. The walk is approximately one hour and runs from Nanzenji Temple to Ginkakuji Temple also known as the Silver Pavilion.

Eve Shabu shabu dinner.

Day 5: Kyoto (Thurs, 28 Oct) B L

Am Visit Buddhist Byodo-in Temple in Uji, including the Phoenix Hall, one of the few original wooden structures surviving from the Heian Period (794-1185).

Pm Travel to Fushimi Inari, famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates, which straddle a network of trails. Take the Tofuku-ji Temple walk, visit Hojo rock garden and Tsutenkyo Bridge and gardens.

Day 6: Kyoto / Mishima (Fri, 29 Oct) B D

Am Transfer to Sekigahara and see the site of the Battle of Sekigahara of 1600 and visit the excellent museum with a viewing deck.

Pm Continue to Inuyama Castle for a talk on Oda Nobunaga and Japanese unification, then take the bullet train from Nagoya to Mishima Tokyu Hotel. Talk: *"Barbarians at the gate."*

Eve Dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 7: Mishima / Shimoda / Mishima (Sat, 30 Oct) B L

Am Visit Shimoda, a pleasant coastal town significant for being one of the first ports opened to foreign vessels because of

Commodore Perry forcing Japan to open. Visit Ryosenji and the small museum to Commodore Perry.

Pm Return to the hotel via the Nirayama Reverberatory Furnaces, a well-preserved iron smelting facility built in 1857 at the start of Japan's industrial revolution.

Eve Option for onsen at hotel.

Day 8: Mishima / Hakone / Kamakura / Tokyo (Sun, 31 Oct)

B L

Am Take a coach to the old Tokaido, the centuries-old route linking Tokyo with the former capital, Kyoto, and walk along its Cedar Avenue. Continue to Hakone and visit the Okada Museum of Art with its superb collection ranging from antiquity to the modern day.

Pm Lunch at a local restaurant. Drive to Kamakura and see the great bronze Buddha, which was cast in 1252. Learn about Minamoto Yoritomo, the first shogun to effectively rule Japan. Drive to Tokyo and check in to the hotel. Talk: *"Edo – early Tokyo."*

Day 9: Tokyo (Mon, 1 Nov)

B D

Am Walk to the Hamarikyu Gardens, once a royal hunting lodge and grounds and take tea in the traditional tea house. Take a cruise through the canals of Tokyo to the historic Asakusa neighbourhood and Senso-ji Temple.

Pm Visit the excellent and recently modernised Edo Museum, which depicts the history of Tokyo. Talk: *"Making modern Japan."*

Eve Fresh fish Izakaya dinner at Shin-Hinomoto Yurakucho.

Day 10: Tokyo (Tues, 2 Nov)

B D

Am/ Pm Take part in a tour with a focus on the arts in Japan, visit the Meiji Shrine and the fashionable Harajuku area, seeing the intricate woodblock prints at the Ota Ukiyoe Woodblock Print Museum. Continue to the Nezu Museum to see its collection of Japanese and Asian pre-modern art and exquisite garden.

Eve Farewell Yakiniku barbecue dinner with views of Tokyo Bay.

Day 11: Tokyo (Wed, 3 Nov)

B

Am Depart hotel after breakfast.

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

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



Walk through the vermilion gates to the Fushimi Inari Shrine



Bullet Train Past Mount Fuji

Travel in and to Japan

The main tour transport will be by private bus, with one bullet train journey. As there is limited space for luggage on the bullet train, large bags will be sent separately ahead of the group by overnight transfers. Participants will use hand luggage for those nights. This cost is included in the tour.

This tour includes regular walking on a daily basis and so a good level of fitness is important for all participants.

Flights to and from Japan are not included with this package. We can help organise these flights.

All hotels are modern 4- or 5-star accommodation. Please note that Japanese hotel rooms can be smaller than in other destinations.

Alongside the main itinerary, there will be optional visits, including a traditional onsen and a walk along the Philosopher's Path in Kyoto. We also allow time at leisure throughout, giving participants the chance to relax or pursue their own interests within each destination. Our national guide, Coco, will be on hand to offer recommendations for meals that are not included in the tour.



You will be accompanied throughout the tour by our Japanese National Guide, Coco. Coco is highly experienced, organised and caring and speaks excellent English.

"Coco was inexhaustible, thorough, humorous and playful!"

Jane and David Hughes, *Medicine and Society in Japan*, May 2025









Inuyama Castle (top); Waterfalls in Izu Peninsula; Kyoto Nijo Castle; Views of Mt Fuji (above)

The cost of the tour is US $6,120 per person sharing a twin room

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is US $7,058

The cost includes:

- 10 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium grade and first class hotels
- The services of a tour leader, Jason James
- The services of an English-speaking national guide, Coco
- A full programme of cultural visits, excursions and activities as detailed in the itinerary
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- All breakfasts, and lunch or dinner as per itinerary
- All transport services in Japan and luggage mailing service between Kyoto and Mishima
- All admission fees, tips and taxes

The cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- Meals not mentioned
- Drinks with meals except welcome and farewell dinners
- All optional excursions, tours and visits; all personal extras such as porterage, laundry and inoculation fees; travel insurance and visas, if applicable

NB: All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.
Places on this tour are strictly limited.

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. We also ensure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to.

From the sublime to the humble, we provide a variety of experiences 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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ATOL
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Stone Garden, Tofukuji Temple, Kyoto (top); Sake barrels at Matsuo Shrine, Kyoto; Golden Pavilion, Kyoto; Kyoto in autumn (above)

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