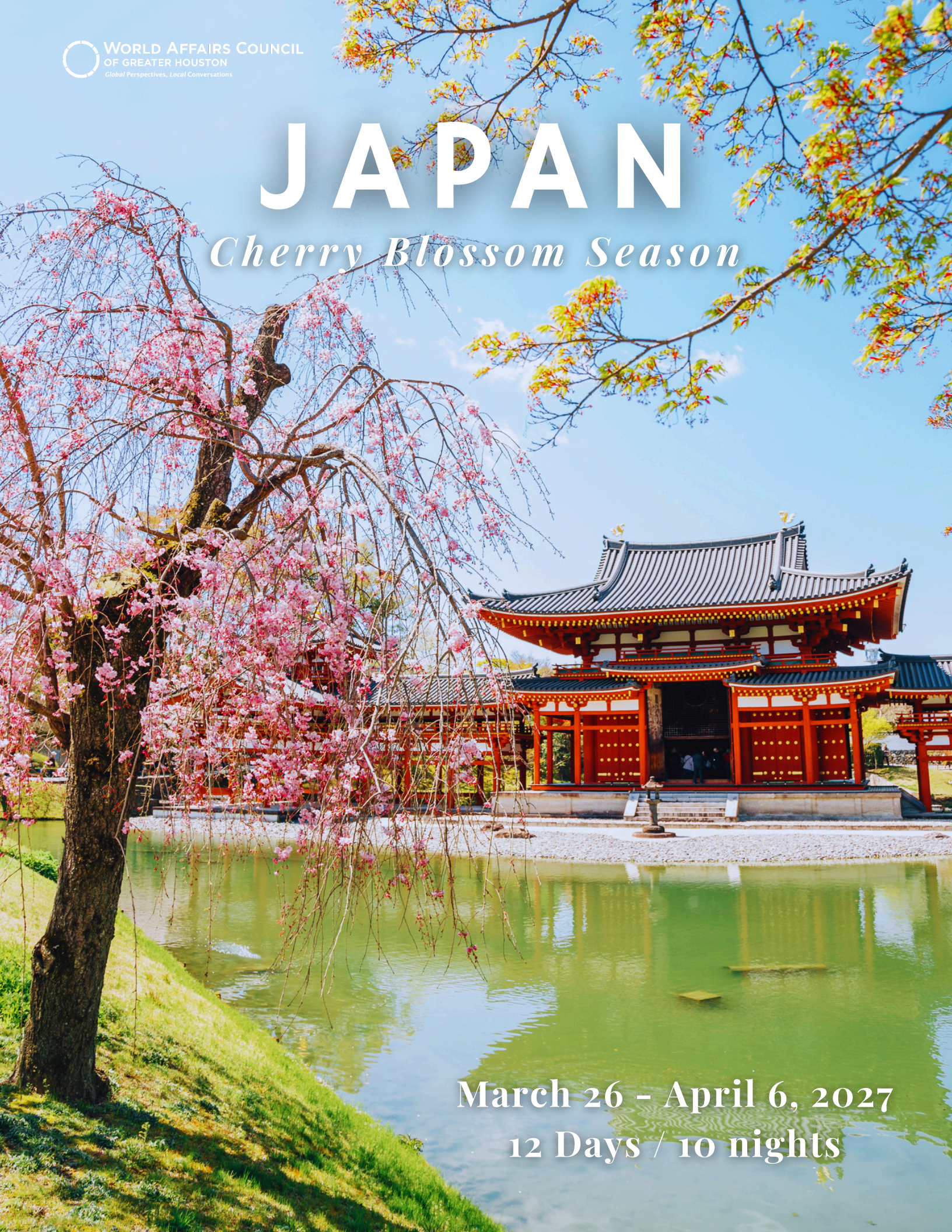
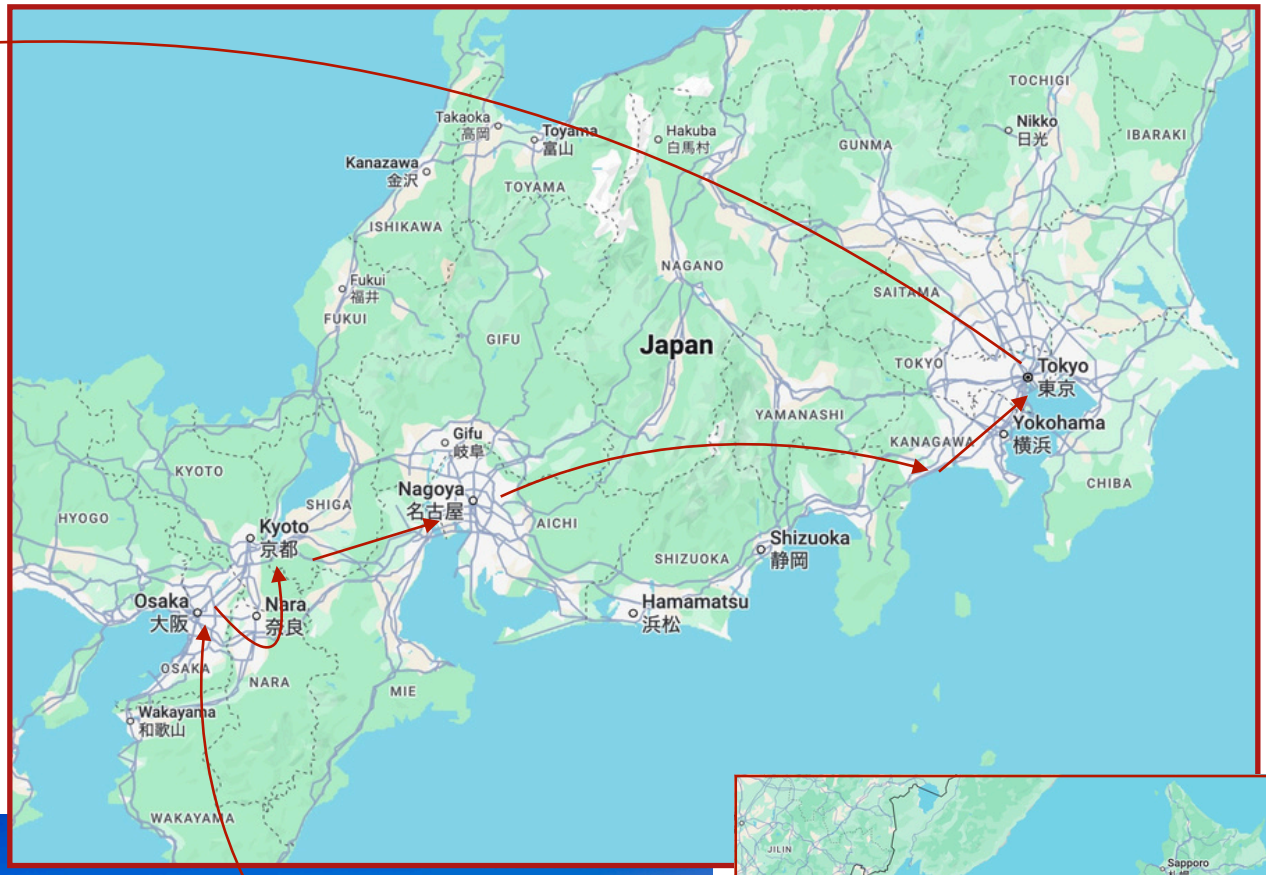

World Affairs Council
of Greater Houston
Global Perspectives, Local Conversations
JAPAN
Cherry Blossom Season
March 26 - April 6, 2027
12 Days / 10 nights



ITINERARY

DAY 1	**Fri, Mar 26**	Leave USA for KIX Airport, Japan	
DAY 2	**Sat, Mar 27**	Arrival - transfer to Kyoto	
DAY 3	**Sun, Mar 28**	Nara excursion - Orinasukan	Kyoto
DAY 4	**Mon, Mar 29**	Kyoto sightseeing with tea ceremony	Kyoto
DAY 5	**Tue, Mar 30**	Kyoto sightseeing with bamboo forest	Kyoto
DAY 6	**Wed, Mar 31**	Bullet train to Nagoya	Nagoya
DAY 7	**Thu, Apr 1**	Bullet train to Hakone	Hakone
DAY 8	**Fri, Apr 2**	Bullet train to Tokyo - Chiba	Tokyo
DAY 9	**Sat, Apr 3**	Tokyo: Full day sightseeing	Tokyo
DAY 10	**Sun, Apr 4**	Tokyo: Full day sightseeing	Tokyo
DAY 11	**Mon, Apr 5**	Tokyo: Leisure day	Tokyo
DAY 12	**Tue, Apr 6**	Departure	

MAP TRAJECTORY





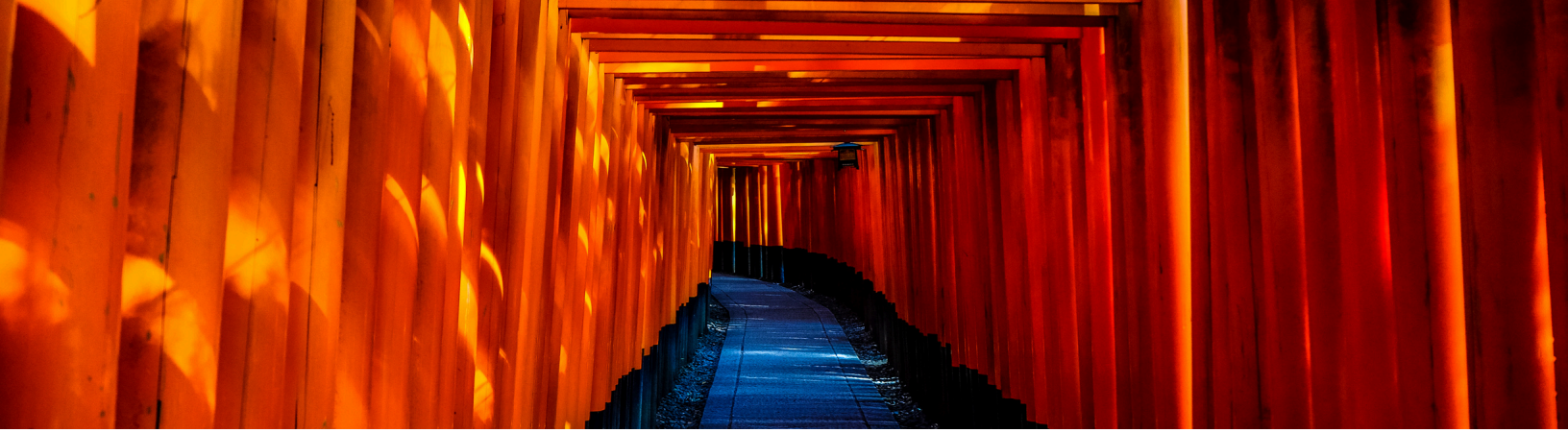






HIGHLIGHTS

- **Japan in Cherry-Blossom Season:** Travel along the celebrated Golden Route from Kyoto and Nara to Nagoya, Hakone, and Tokyo during one of Japan's most beautiful seasons.
- **The Historic Treasures of Nara: Visit the monumental Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji, encounter the sacred deer of Nara Park, and explore lantern-lined Kasuga Taisha.**
- **Kyoto's Living Traditions:** Experience Kyoto beyond its temples through a private tea ceremony with kimono dressing and an elegant dinner accompanied by geiko or maiko, traditional dance, and shamisen music.
- **Arashiyama by Rickshaw:** Travel through quieter lanes and the bamboo landscape by traditional rickshaw, followed by the riverside scenery of Togetsukyo Bridge and Arashiyama Park.
- **Japanese Arts and Crafts:** Meet Kyoto's living craft traditions through hand-weaving at Orinasukan, an urushi lacquer demonstration, and a hands-on Arimatsu shibori workshop.
- **Seasonal Japanese Cuisine:** Enjoy carefully selected regional meals, including Kyoto kaiseki at Ryotei Saami, Nagoya specialties, and a special farewell dinner in Tokyo.
- **Japan by Shinkansen:** Experience the comfort, speed, and precision of Japan's renowned bullet trains on journeys connecting Kyoto, Nagoya, Hakone, and Tokyo.
- **Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology:** Follow Toyota's remarkable evolution from textile machinery to automobile manufacturing and advanced industrial technology through working exhibits and demonstrations.
- **Art and Nature in Hakone:** Cruise across scenic Lake Ashi, visit the architecturally striking Pola Museum of Art, and unwind with a traditional onsen experience in the mountains.
- **The Future of Agriculture:** Visit Chiba University's plant-factory facilities to learn how controlled environments, hydroponics, LED lighting, and vertical cultivation may contribute to more sustainable food production.
- **Tokyo Through the Centuries:** Discover the flavors of Tsukiji, the traditional streets and temple culture of Asakusa, and the story of the city's transformation at the renovated Edo-Tokyo Museum.
- **Art, Gardens, and Shopping in Tokyo:** Explore the refined Nezu Museum and its garden, view the Imperial Palace and Nijubashi, and experience Japanese food, crafts, and elegant retail culture in Ginza.
- **A Comfortable, Unhurried Journey:** Enjoy thoughtfully paced sightseeing, later morning departures on non-travel days, time to rest, and a full leisure day for independent exploration in Tokyo.



INCLUDED

10 Nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast, in listed hotels.

Lunches and dinners as indicated in the itinerary;

including special Kaiseki dinner.

Geiko/maiko dinner in Kyoto.

Tea ceremony in Kyoto.

Visit of Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology.

Visit of Japan Plant Factory Association at Chiba University.

English speaking professional tour guides.

Transportation with AC vehicles & drivers.

Bullet train tickets as given in the itinerary.

One piece of luggage per person transfer from hotel in Kyoto to hotel in Tokyo.

Arrival and departure transfers for suggested flights.

All entry fees to places mentioned in the itinerary.

Local taxes.

NOT INCLUDED

International airfare.

Visa fees if applicable.

Drinks with included meals, except tea or coffee for breakfast.

Gratuities for guides & drivers.

Personal expenditures like phone calls, laundry, medical expenses.

Travel insurance.



SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

Suggested flights are on UNITED and partner airlines:

26 Mar UA 1966	**Houston to San Francisco dep: 8:20 am / arr: 10:42am**
26 Mar UA 35	**San Francisco to Osaka dep: 12:20 pm / arr: 4:40 pm**
05 Apr UA 6	**Tokyo to Houston dep: 5:00 pm / arr: 2:50 pm**

Economy class: $2,550
Business class: $7,650
per person, including taxes, surcharges and fees as of July 21, 2026.

Fares may change based on availability.

Preferred Travel Partner

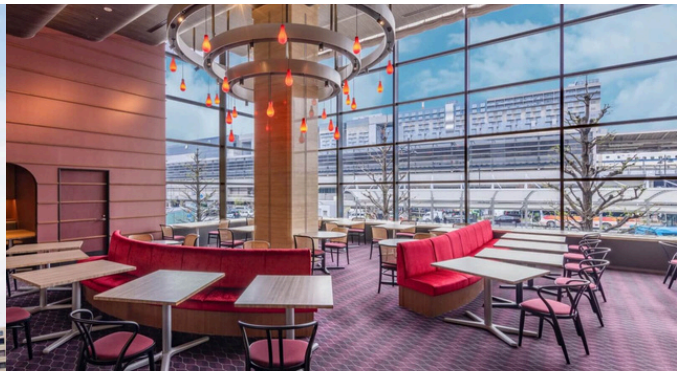
UNITED

March 26 - April 6, 2027
12 Days / 10 nights

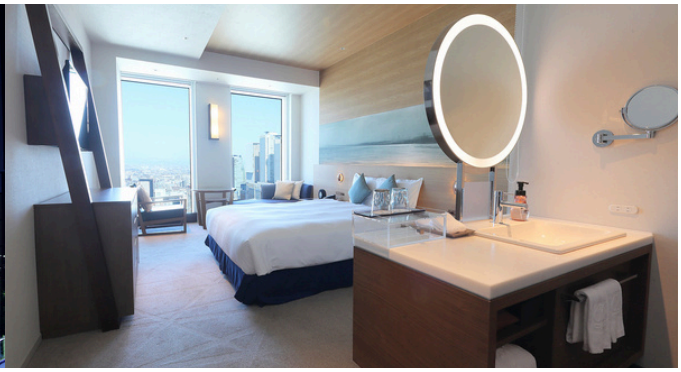
ACCOMMODATIONS

March 26 - April 6, 2027
12 Days / 10 nights

Keihan Kyoto Grande Kyoto kyoto.hotelkeihan.co.jp/

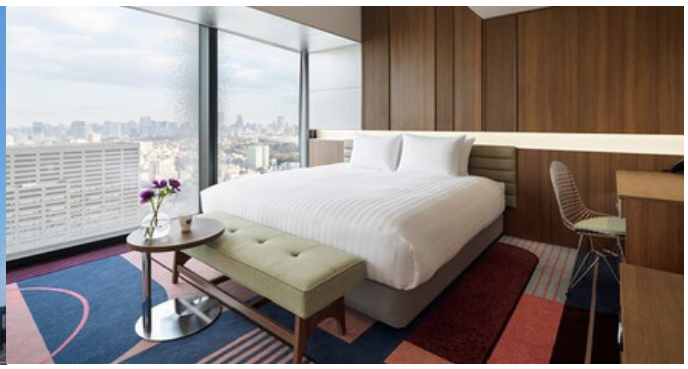
Nagoya Prince Hotel Sky Tower Nagoya princehotels.com/nagoya/

Hotel de Yama Hakone hakone-hoteldeyama.jp/en/




Hotel Groove Shinjuku Tokyo panpacific.com/en/hotels-and-resorts



PROGRAM DETAILS

Day 1: Fri, Mar 26 **Leave USA**

We leave the United States for Kansai International Airport (KIX), the principal international gateway for Kyoto and the surrounding Kansai region. The overnight flight crosses the International Date Line, and arrival in Japan takes place the following afternoon.

Day 2: Sat, Mar 27 **KIX - Kyoto**

We arrive at Kansai International Airport in the afternoon. After completing arrival formalities, we meet our local team and travel by private coach to Kyoto.
On arrival the evening is left free, with no scheduled dinner, allowing everyone to rest after the long journey and begin the program at an unhurried pace.

Overnight in Kyoto **Meals: Non included today**

Day 3: Sun, Mar 28 **Nara - Kyoto**

After breakfast, we depart for Nara, Japan's first permanent capital. Established in 710, the city played a formative role in the development of Japan's political institutions, Buddhist traditions, and early artistic culture.

Our visit begins at Tōdai-ji, one of Japan's most important Buddhist temples. Inside the immense Great Buddha Hall stands the Daibutsu, a monumental eighth-century bronze image of Vairocana Buddha. The scale of both the statue and its timber hall reflects the ambition of the imperial court and the importance of Buddhism in early Japan.

We continue through Nara Park, where free-roaming deer have long been regarded in Shinto belief as sacred messengers. Within the wooded precincts, Kasuga Taisha is distinguished by vermilion buildings and hundreds of stone and bronze lanterns donated by worshippers over the centuries.

Following a relaxed lunch in Nara, we return toward Kyoto for a guided visit to Orinasukan, a former Nishijin weaver's residence and workshop. Its machiya architecture, courtyard, weaving tools, regional textiles, and reproductions of historic Noh costumes provide an intimate introduction to Kyoto's textile heritage.

In the working area, artisans demonstrate hand-weaving techniques and explain how patterned cloth is built thread by thread. A small weaving experience allows the group to appreciate the concentration and dexterity required, while a display of kimono places the craft within Kyoto's living culture. We return to the hotel before dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Kyoto **Meals: B –L- D**



Day 4: Mon, Mar 29 **Kyoto - Living Culture**

Following a leisurely breakfast, we begin our day at Kiyomizu-dera, one of Kyoto's most celebrated temples. Founded in 778 and dedicated to Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, its dramatic wooden hall extends over the hillside on massive timber pillars and opens broad views across the city.

From the temple, we walk at an easy pace through Sannenzaka and Ninenzaka, preserved sloping lanes lined with traditional townhouses, small craft shops, cafés, and confectioners. Time is allowed to browse independently and enjoy the atmosphere rather than moving immediately to another formal visit.

After a pleasant lunch, we take part in a private kimono-dressing and tea ceremony experience. With assistance in selecting and wearing traditional attire, we are introduced to the utensils, gestures, and hospitality of Chadō, the Way of Tea. Each measured movement reflects harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility.

The afternoon includes time to return to the hotel and rest. In the evening, we gather for an elegant private dinner with geiko or maiko. Traditional dance and shamisen music are combined with conversation, offering a gracious and personal encounter with Kyoto's performing arts and the years of training behind them.

Overnight in Kyoto **Meals: B - L – D**



Day 5: Tue, Mar 30 **Kyoto - Arashiyama and Craft**

After breakfast, we depart for Arashiyama, the scenic district on Kyoto's western edge. A traditional rickshaw ride carries us through quieter lanes and selected sections of the bamboo landscape, offering an elevated view without a long walk through the busiest paths.

We continue to Togetsukyo Bridge, the Moon-Crossing Bridge, and the riverside paths of Arashiyama Park Nakanoshima. The open setting provides time to enjoy the Katsura River, the wooded hills, and, if the season cooperates, the delicate color of the cherry blossoms. Flowering is natural and cannot be guaranteed on a particular date.

Following a relaxed lunch, we visit Kinkaku-ji, the Golden Pavilion. Its upper stories, covered in gold leaf, are reflected in a carefully composed pond garden. Originally built as the retirement villa of Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the pavilion later became a Zen temple and remains one of Kyoto's defining images.

Our final cultural visit is Tsutsumi Asakichi Urushi, a Kyoto lacquer workshop founded in 1909. A specialist explains how sap from the urushi tree is refined into lacquer and demonstrates the patient, layered processes that produce its depth, durability, and characteristic sheen.

In the evening, we enjoy a seasonal kaiseki dinner at Ryotei Saami in Maruyama Park. The carefully paced sequence of dishes expresses Kyoto's respect for seasonality, balance, and presentation. After dinner, a short visit to the illuminated blossoms of Maruyama Park is planned, conditions permitting, before returning to the hotel.

Overnight in Kyoto **Meals: B - L – D**



Day 6: Wed, Mar 31 **Kyoto - Nagoya**

This is one of the program's earlier starts. Our large luggage is forwarded directly from Kyoto to Tokyo, and we travel with a small overnight bag for Nagoya and Hakone. We board the Tōkaidō Shinkansen for the smooth, fast journey to Nagoya, an experience that reflects Japan's precision and world-leading rail technology.

On arrival, an English-guided visit to the Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology traces Toyota's evolution from textile machinery to automobile production. Working looms, metal-forming equipment, early vehicles, production demonstrations, and displays of current technology reveal the ingenuity and continuous improvement behind Japan's industrial development.

After a comfortable lunch, we make a brief exterior photo stop at Nagoya Castle if time and traffic permit. Its stone ramparts, green roofs, and golden shachihoko recall the city's importance to the Tokugawa family; this is intentionally a short stop rather than a full interior visit.

We then continue to Arimatsu, a historic center of shibori resist dyeing along the old Tōkaidō highway. A demonstration shows how cloth is bound, stitched, folded, or compressed before dyeing, and a hands-on tenugui shibori workshop allows each traveler to create a small cotton piece to take home.

Following hotel check-in, dinner introduces several Nagoya specialties, selected according to the final menu. The evening is otherwise free for rest.

Overnight in Nagoya **Meals: B - L – D**





Day 7 Thu, April 1 **Nagoya - Mishima - Hakone**

We make another early departure and board the Shinkansen to Mishima, the rail gateway to Hakone. On a clear day, Mount Fuji may appear from the train or along the onward route, although mountain views always depend on weather and cloud cover. From Mishima, our private coach takes us into Hakone for a restful cruise on Lake Ashi. Forested slopes and lakeside scenery frame the journey, with possible views toward Mount Fuji and the red torii of Hakone Shrine when conditions are favorable.

We next visit the Pola Museum of Art, designed to preserve a sense of harmony between art and the surrounding national-park forest. Much of the building is set below ground, where soft natural light introduces a collection that ranges from Western and Japanese painting to ceramics, glass, lacquer, and historic cosmetic utensils. The exact works on display will depend on the museum's 2027 exhibition program.

After lunch nearby, we arrive at the hotel in the mid-afternoon, leaving ample time to settle in and enjoy a traditional onsen hot-spring bath. Guests wash before entering the warm communal pool; bathing areas are normally separate for men and women, and swimwear is not worn.

Dinner is served at the hotel, bringing the day to a quiet close in Hakone's mountain setting.

Overnight in Hakone **Meals: B-L-D**

Day 8: Fri, April 2 **Hakone - Chiba University - Tokyo**

This morning's earlier departure takes us by private coach to Odawara Station. We board the Shinkansen to Shinagawa and continue by coach across Greater Tokyo to the Kashiwa- no-ha area of Chiba Prefecture.

At the Chiba University plant-factory facilities, an English-speaking researcher or specialist introduces controlled-environment agriculture. These systems precisely manage light, temperature, humidity, nutrients, and water, enabling consistent production while making efficient use of space and resources.

The visit may include hydroponic cultivation, LED lighting, environmental controls, monitoring equipment, and vertical growing systems. It offers a forward-looking perspective on the challenges of climate variability, limited farmland, labor shortages, food security, and water conservation. As this is a working research environment, access will follow the university's operational requirements.

A comfortable lunch is arranged in the Kashiwa-no-ha area. We then return to central Tokyo, check in to the hotel, and allow time to rest before dinner at a well-chosen restaurant within easy walking distance.

Overnight in Tokyo **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 9: Sat, April 3 **Tokyo – From the Shoguns to the Modern Metropolis**

After breakfast, we begin at the Tsukiji Outer Market, where narrow lanes are lined with seafood specialists, produce stalls, tea merchants, knife shops, and vendors of prepared foods. The wholesale auction moved to Toyosu in 2018, but Tsukiji remains one of Tokyo's most engaging places to encounter the ingredients, precision, and seasonality of Japanese cuisine.

We continue to Asakusa, Tokyo's traditional downtown. Passing beneath the great lantern of the Kaminarimon, we follow Nakamise Street, a centuries-old shopping approach with sweets, fans, textiles, and small souvenirs, to Sensō-ji, the city's oldest Buddhist temple. Incense, prayer, and vivid architecture preserve the neighborhood's living spiritual character.

Lunch is enjoyed in the Asakusa area, with time to absorb the district's atmosphere before the afternoon visit.

At the recently renovated Edo-Tokyo Museum, large models, reconstructed spaces, historic objects, and digital displays trace the transformation of the shogun's city of Edo into modern Tokyo. The permanent exhibition is organized across Edo and Tokyo zones, bringing together daily life, commerce, disasters, rebuilding, transport, and popular culture.

We return to the hotel in the late afternoon. Dinner is not included, leaving the evening free for rest or an independent meal.

Overnight in Tokyo **Meals: B-L**





Day 10: Sun, April 4 **Tokyo - Art, Palace and Ginza**

Following a leisurely breakfast, we begin with the Nezu Museum in Minami-Aoyama. Founded around the collection of Nezu Kaichirō, the museum presents pre-modern Japanese and East Asian painting, calligraphy, sculpture, ceramics, lacquer, textiles, and tea wares. Kengo Kuma's serene architecture opens toward a richly planted garden with stone paths, lanterns, and tea houses.

We then make an exterior photo stop at the Imperial Palace and Nijubashi. Moats, stone walls, and the graceful bridges recall the site's earlier life as Edo Castle, once the stronghold of the Tokugawa shoguns and today the principal residence of Japan's imperial family.

Lunch is served in Ginza, Tokyo's historic luxury-shopping district. Afterwards, we visit Ginza Mitsukoshi for time on its celebrated basement food floors and upper levels devoted to Japanese tableware, living, and craft. Beautiful packaging, seasonal sweets, prepared foods, ceramics, and gift items make the department store an enjoyable cultural visit as well as a shopping opportunity.

The group returns to the hotel with free time to rest and prepare for the evening. Our journey concludes with a farewell dinner at a carefully selected restaurant, celebrating the history, craftsmanship, landscapes, and hospitality encountered throughout the program.

Overnight in Tokyo **Meals: B-L-D**





Day 11: Mon, April 5 **Tokyo**

Today is entirely at leisure, providing time to rest, revisit a favorite neighborhood, shop or make an independent excursion according to personal interests.

Overnight in Tokyo **Meals: B**

Day 12: Tue, April 6 **Departure**

Depending on the confirmed flight schedule, we are transferred by private coach to Narita International Airport for the return journey. Assistance is provided with the group departure arrangements, bringing the Japan program to a close.

Meals: B





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