

"Japan Culture Tour"

A star (✳) indicates an addition or change to the previous itinerary

FRIDAY 10---LEAVE SLC

SATURDAY 11---TOKYO

✳**Shibuya**

Walk along the most crowded pedestrian intersection in Japan. Visit the statue of hachiko, the famous dog

SUNDAY 12---TOKYO

This is Japan's modern capitol and the world's largest city. We will see a lot of concrete and neon. Don't get lost. We must keep in mind that almost everything we will see in this city (including temples and shrines) was built after 1945 because Tokyo was largely destroyed by US firebombs in World War II.

✳**Tsukiji**

We begin our first day in Tokyo with a visit to Asia's largest fish market.

Asakusa

Senso-ji

Originally built in 645, it is Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple. The Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu later built a Shinto shrine in the temple grounds. The main gate, the pagoda, and some of the buildings were destroyed in World War II and later rebuilt.

✳**Kappabashi**

This is a wild street packed with restaurant supplies, such as the plastic food you see everywhere

Edo-Tokyo Museum

Step back in time into Tokyo's history. Be sure and see everything.

Meiji-Jingu/Harajuku

Tokyo's main Shinto Shrine is right next to it's main teen shopping hangout. It was built in 1920 in honor of the Emperor Meiji who brought Japan into the modern world. It was completely destroyed in World War II and rebuilt in 1958.

Shinjuku

We will see the city from one its tallest buildings, then walk through Tokyo's busiest night-time shopping and entertainment district.

MONDAY 13---KYOTO

Kyoto means "Capitol City" and was Japan's capitol from 794 to 1869--more than 1000 years! It considered the "heart" of Japanese culture. Fortunately, this city escaped World War II air raids due to it's place on the United Nations Register of Protected Historical Sites.

By the way, the capitol of Japan is determined by where the Emperor lives. During the 1700's and 1800's, even though Edo was the largest and most powerful city, Kyoto was still the capitol because the Emperor continued to live here. The current Emperor, Akihito, lives in a palace in Tokyo (the "Eastern Capitol").

Nijo-jo

This is the castle built by Tokyogawa Ieyasu, the samurai general who unified Japan in 1600 and made Edo into Japan's largest and most powerful city. Notice the "nightingale floors" that squeak to warn the paranoid general of intruders.

Kinkaku-ji ("The Golden Pavillion")

This is Japan's most famous building. In 1956 it was burned down by a fanatical monk who thought it was too beautiful for this sinful world. Since then it has been rebuilt and is repainted every ten years to keep it looking shiny and new.

Ryoan-ji

This temple houses a famous zen rock garden. Zen gardens represent the world and are meant to be contemplated quietly.

TUESDAY 14---KYOTO

***Hime-ji**

This is Japan's most magnificent samurai castle- one of the few authentic ones still remaining. It is listed as one of the top three most spectacular castles in the world

Byodo-in

This beautiful temple, one of Japan's oldest, appears on the back of the ¥10 coin. This is the setting for the world's first novel, "Tale of Genji" by Lady Murasaki, written clear back in 1100.

Fushimi Inari Taisha

A Shinto "fox" shrine with hundreds of red torii gates lining the mountain path. Foxes are magical creatures and can give great blessings of prosperity, or evil curses. For fun, they can even take possession of your body. Let's try not to make them mad.

WEDNESDAY 15---KYOTO

Ginkakuji

This temple has one of the best moss gardens in Japan. Everything looks natural, but it is

actually carefully sculpted and maintained. The main building was meant to be covered in silver (like the Kinkaku-ji was in gold) but they never got around to it.

Kiyomizu-dera

This is Kyoto's most popular temple, with a beautiful overlook and a sacred spring with healing powers.

Sannen-zaka, Ninen-zaka

These two picturesque streets have been preserved for tourists seeking a taste of "old Japan." We might even take one of the many side streets and peek into an old neighborhood or two.

Yasaka Jinja and Gion

In the evening we will visit this shrine to see a live performance of traditional music and dancing. By the way, this is the neighborhood where the movie "*Memoirs of a Geisha*" was filmed.

THURSDAY 16---NARA

This is Japan's first capitol city (710-794) and the center of Japanese Buddhism. This is where Japan most heavily felt the influence of China--in its government, city planning, religion, architecture, language, dress, music, and just about everything else. Japan was afflicted with Chinese fever.

Todai-ji

This temple is the world's largest wooden building housing Japan's largest statue of the Buddha.

Nara Koen and Kasuga Taisha

Don't feed the deer that roam free in this park. Ok, go ahead, but don't be surprised if you make a friend for life.

Naramachi

This is a block of streets that have preserved the original architecture and atmosphere of the ancient capitol.

FRIDAY 17---KYOTO-TOKYO

Visit Gion Matsuri Parade

For our last morning in Kyoto we will try to get a glimpse of the festival parade which is the climax of the Gion Matsuri.

***Omotesando**

For our last day in Japan, we will spend some time back in Tokyo wandering along the city's most beautiful street (yes, there are trees in Tokyo). We will do some last-minute souvenir shopping at the famous Oriental Bazaar store.

***Dinner with Yuzawa delegation**

Have you ever had *shabushabu*? This may be the best meal we will eat on this entire trip.

Enjoy the food and the opportunity to meet our friends from Yuzawa.

Odaiba

Finally we can let our hair down and spend what's left of our money on a giant ferris wheel and a modern game arcade.

SATURDAY 18---DEPART NARITA

We ride a train back to the airport and bid our final farewell.