

Japan's National Parks, Art & Culture Cruise Itinerary

[Link: Japan's National Parks, Art & Culture Cruise](#)

Tour Overview

Join us on an unforgettable circumnavigation of Japan's main island Honshu and exploration of its wilderness, arts, culture and rich history. A Circumnavigation of Honshu, Osaka - Kobe to Kobe, including South Korea.

This voyage has been specially designed to explore and experience Japan's seamless blend of ancient customs with ultramodern living, incredible wilderness, wildlife and renowned arts as we cruise from iconic cities to remote coastlines and islands.

Highlights include Kanazawa's thriving centre of the arts, long known for its lacquerware, outstanding collectable pottery of the Kutani style, goldleaf workmanship, delicate hand painting of silk for kimonos and classical Noh theatre dramas performed since the 14th Century, and Naoshima Island - Japan's Art Island. Visit two of Japan's best contemporary art museums - the recently-opened Hachinhoe Art Museum and the Towada Art Center, celebrate Japan's internationally-renowned magna culture at Ishinomaki, explore the living museum Ise- Shima National Park and Japan's most sacred shrine complex Ise Jingū.

Our voyage will see us visiting the iconic Japanese island-dotted seascapes of Matsushima and Argo Bays and discovering the unique plants, wildlife and wilderness hiking trails on UNESCO registered Global Geopark Dogojima Island and Izu Oshima Island, Bandai-Asahi National Park and the impressive lakes, hot springs and volcanic wonderland of Shikotsu-Toya National Park.

Also on the itinerary is the iconic the five-storey Pagoda of Miyajima, sobering Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park with its eternal Flame of Peace, a day in South Korea's Ulsan visiting the fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Site Gyeongju - the 'museum without walls' and Karatsu's medieval heritage.

Join us for this rare opportunity to sail around Japan exploring its unspoiled nature, world renowned arts scene, culture and history.

Itinerary

Day 1: Osaka



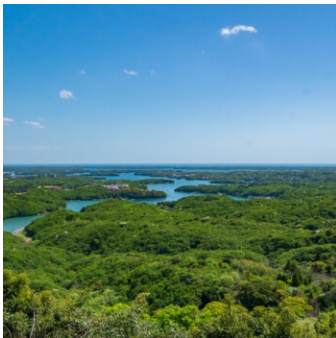
Arrive at Honshu's largest port city Osaka where modern architecture and a vibrant dining scene are nestled alongside the 16th Century shogunate Osaka Castle, and make your way to your hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening meet your fellow voyagers and expedition guides over dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Osaka



Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before exploring Osaka, opportunities here include visiting Minoh Park and Osaka Castle. With an area of just 9.6 square kilometres (963 hectares) Minoh Park is one of Japan's smallest National Parks and home to iconic 33-metre high Minoh Waterfall and diverse wildlife including Japanese Salamander and protected Mino Monkeys. Explore Osaka Castle, one of Japan's most famous landmarks, take in the views from Osaka Castle Main Tower and relive dramatic stories of warlords and Osaka's fascinating history. Board Heritage Adventurer for lunch as your Captain and Expedition Team welcome you aboard.

Day 3: Ise-Shima National Park



Expect a day like no other as we explore Ise-Shima National Park. Often likened to a living museum the peninsula of Ise-Shima, or just 'Shima' as it is known to the locals, there is much to discover here including endless forests and abundant nature, rich maritime history, incredible coastal scenery and Japan's most sacred shrine complex Ise Jingū. Comprising some 125 different shrines hidden among a labyrinth of mossy walls and dating back to the third century Ise Jingū is considered the spiritual home of Shinto cosmology. Explore grand shrine, Kotai Jingū, made entirely of Japanese cypress where no metal nails or screws have been used in its construction and, in accordance with Shinto practice, is rebuilt every 20 years in order to preserve its purity. Currently in its 62nd iteration, it was last rebuilt in 2013. Shima has been an official source of seafood for Japan's imperial family since the 5th Century and the iconic amulet-wearing ama divers, female seabed foragers have been responsibly harvesting these waters since Japan's Jomon era. At Ago Bay gaze out over the fascinating seascape created by more than 60 islands dotting the water and observe Shima's sacred Meoto Iwa, Wedded Rocks, connected by a shimenawa rope near the Futami-Okitama Shrine.

Day 4: Izu Oshima Island



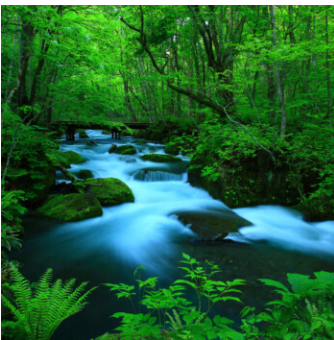
Izu Oshima is the largest of the Izu Islands, a chain of islands lying to the south of the Japanese mainland, which preserves its own unique natural and human history. Mount Mihara towers over the landscape at the island's centre, to the east a dramatic cliff drops into the ocean, while gently sloping plains extend towards the west. Almost entirely covered by forests, Oshima Island was certified as a Japan Geopark in September 2010 in recognition of its unique status. This morning we will explore and discover the unique plants and birds that call the island home as well as meeting the local inhabitants to discover their way of life.

Day 5: Ishinomaki



After a morning at sea with presentations from our on board experts we arrive in the port city of Ishinomaki. The city is renowned for the Shiogama Seafood Wholesale Market and its colourful urban core showcasing its 'manga' culture - the art of Japanese comic books and illustrated novels - thanks to famed pioneer Shotaro Ishinomori and creator of the popular Kamen Rider series. Throughout the city you can observe artworks and statues celebrating the importance of the artist and the art on Japanese culture. South of the city is Matsushima Bay, studded with more than 200 pine-covered islands and considered one of Japan's three most iconic views, take the opportunity to explore this beautiful landscape from the shores or discover from the water.

Day 6: Hachinohe & Lake Towada



With a Pacific shoreline of outstanding natural beauty, a clutch of fantastic cultural sights, thronging markets and delectable seafood, there is a lot to see and experience during a visit to Hachinohe and the Aomori Region. Today there will be the opportunity to explore the region's fascinating connection with contemporary art through visits to two of Japan's best contemporary art museums - the recently opened Hachinhoe Art Museum and the Towada Art Center. Reflecting a new approach to contemporary art, Hachinhoe Art Museum, also known as an 'art farm' offers a dynamic new interpretation of how and where art is created, housed in an innovative design intended to bring the community together to utilise the space. At Towada Art Centre, one of Japan's foremost contemporary art institutions, the striking Ryue Nishizawa designed building features contemporary artists such as Leandro Erlich, Yayoi Kusama and Ron Mueck. Alternatively join a visit to the stunning Lake Towada, a 2,000-year-old flooded double caldera some 400 metres above sea level, and its surrounding forest in Towada Hachimantai National Park. Lake Towada is the largest caldera lake on Honshu, and is characterised by two large peninsula's which extend nearly a third of the way across the lake. On a clear day Mt Towada is reflected in the still waters of the lake creating a picture post card scene. While a short walk brings you to Oirase Stream with its beautiful and dynamic cluster of 30 waterfalls.

Day 7: Muroran



Adventures abound at Shikotsu-Toya National Park, named after its famous twin caldera lakes. Another picturesque natural hot spot, the park's spectacular scenery including its impressive lakes, hot springs and volcanic wonderland, are all easily accessible and offer multiple hiking and walking options. Activities here could include riding the cable car to the top of Mount Usu to take in the grand scale views over Lake Toya or visiting the geothermal spectacle of steaming vents and sulphurous streams at Jigokudani aka 'Hell Valley' and the Upopoy National Museum of the Ainu which stands on the shores of Lake Poroto where you have the opportunity to see and experience the Ainu culture including cuisine, music and crafts. This afternoon enjoy free time to explore Muroran at your leisure, visit the scenic cape and lighthouse or take in the city from above after a walk up Mount Sokuryo.

Day 8: Akita



A key city in the Tohoku region since medieval times, Akita was once a castle town of the Satake clan, but today is a vibrant, prosperous city that seamlessly honours its past while still embracing its young energetic spirit. Noted for its burgeoning art community, there are several fine museums to explore including the Hirano Masakichi Art Museum housing a collection of work by Western and Japanese artists as well as the Akita City Folklore Museum. Venture inland to discover the Kakunodate Samurai District, a living museum that showcases the samurai way of life in a picturesque setting that remains largely unchanged since it was established in 1620. Beyond Kakunodate in the mountainous spine of Honshu is Mount Akita-Komagatake where there are excellent hiking opportunities in sub-alpine and alpine habitats at the southern-most extension of Towada-Hachimantai National Park.

Day 9: Niigata

Today sees us visiting the bustling port town of Niigata, famous for snow, rice, sake, hot springs and the six-arched, granite-sided stone Bandai Bridge, designated as an Important Cultural Property in 2004, and one of the most scenic spots in the city. Highlights here include Bandai-Asahi National Park, Japan's second largest national park, combining stunning volcanic scenery and hot springs with lush forests, verdant highlands crisscrossed with walking trails and home to Asiatic black bears, squirrels, foxes, and migratory birds. Elsewhere Takada Castle Site Park, with its 3-storey castle from the Edo Period, offers panoramic views of the Takada Plain, while the 193 hectares of Fukushimagata Wetlands is home to endangered flora and fauna, including the rarely seen gigantic lotus *Euryale Ferox*, and listed on Japan's 100 greatest natural environments.

Day 10: Kanazawa



Options today include exploring the historic mountain settlement and UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go, high in the remote mountains of the Shogawa River Valley in Hakusan National Park. Take in the sights on mountain walks and experience the unique cultural traditions including the region's iconic Gassho-zukuri farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old, designed to withstand the heavy snow in winter and provide a large attic space for cultivating silkworms. Alternatively explore the rich art centre of Kanazawa discovering some of the unique styles of Japanese art. Kanazawa is rightly famous for its Kutani-style pottery, exquisite lacquerware, gold-leaf workmanship, hand painted silk, and classical Noh dance-drama performed since the 14th Century. Wander winding cobblestone streets, elegant restaurants, craft galleries and visit the impressive Edo-period Kenrokuen Garden, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan, and explore the Omicho Market boasting everything from flowers, to crafts and food.

Day 11: Matsue



From the port of Sakaiminato we visit Matsue, the 'town of water,' which nestles between a scenic lake and a large lagoon. We will visit the cultural attractions of the town including the 17th century Matsue Castle before enjoying a boat ride along the local canals. After lunch on board spend the afternoon at leisure or visit the Adachi Museum of Art which is set in a beautiful natural environment. The museum is renowned for its superb Japanese gardens and collection of contemporary Japanese paintings, comprising some 1,500 of the country's most highly regarded paintings produced after the Meiji period.

Day 12: Ulsan, South Korea



Today we cross the Sea of Japan to Ulsan in South Korea where we plan to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Gyeongju. The capital of the Shilla Dynasty and dating back to the first millennium, Gyeongju is known as 'the museum without walls' and is full of ancient Korean history and Buddhist culture. Enjoy strolling through hundreds of excavated monuments, temples, tombs and pagodas, and experience Korean delicacies, cultural performances, and visit the National Museum with its gold jewellery, metal weapons, and distinctive pottery. Today provides a perfect taste of the best South Korea has to offer.

Day 13: Shimonoseki, Japan



This morning we return to Japan and Shimonoseki Port perched above the 650-metre-wide Kanmon Straits and tucked away at the western end of Japan's main island Honshu. Surrounded by water on three sides, Shimonoseki is rightly famous for its seafood and, in addition to being considered the gateway to Kyushu, is also known as 'Japan's Pufferfish/Fugu Capital' - the potentially deadly local delicacy requiring takumi-level preparation by specially trained Fugu chefs. Other highlights include city's iconic Kanmon Bridge spanning Honshu and Kyushu Islands, world famous Karato Fish Market and the beautiful Akama Shinto Shrine built to honour drowned child Emperor Antoku. Our excursions today include time to explore Kokura Castle and its rich history at the crossroads of Japanese history, and discover the beautiful Shiranoe Botanical Garden accompanied by its resident gardeners. There is also time to explore the world famous Karato Fish Market adjacent to where Heritage Adventurer is docked and visit Akama Shinto Shrine on the shores of the Kanon Strait.

Day 14: Hiroshima & Miyajima Island



Despite its history including being the site of the world's first atomic bomb attack on the 6 August 1945, Hiroshima is a vibrant and thriving cosmopolitan community. We plan to visit the beautiful Peace Park and Museum, with its sombre cenotaph containing names of atomic bomb victims, and the permanently lit 'Flame of Peace'. After visiting the Peace Park we will travel to Miyajima Island, considered one of Japan's most scenic spots and the location of the Torii Gate and the Daisho-in Buddhist temple. For those after a nature fix, ascend Mount Misen on Miyajima Island by cable car and enjoy a hike, admiring the views below of the Shinto Shrine and Torri Gate.

Day 15: Takamatsu



Shikoku Island's Takamatsu has had a long history as a port town earning itself the nickname 'Gateway to Shikoku', although more recently locals have been calling it 'Udon Kingdom'. If you have an interest in plants a visit to Ritsurin Park, considered one of Japan's finest gardens, is sure to be a highlight. Next you will enjoy a visit to Kinashi, one of Japan's main bonsai production centres, where you will learn about traditional methods of growing bonsai. For those interested in history and art you may wish to travel to Naoshima Island for a full-day excursion. Shikoku Island is known for its art and this excursion to Naoshima will have you admiring its architecture and art museums, including Chichu Art Museum and Benesse House, featuring work by Japanese and international artists.

Day 16: Osaka

This morning sail back into Osaka, after breakfast there will be a complimentary coach to a central hotel or the Kansai International Airport. To allow time for disembarkation procedures and travel from Osaka, we do not recommend booking flights departing before 1300 hours.

What to Expect

The focus and emphasis of every expedition is getting you ashore as often as possible for as long as possible with maximum safety and comfort. Our Expeditions are accompanied by some of the most experienced naturalists and guides, who have devoted a lifetime to field research in the areas that we visit.

Every day we offer a combination of interesting shore excursions and fun shipboard activities. The number of participants per group may vary as there are a variety of daily activities to choose from, but you can generally expect a group size of maximum 30. Our excursions onshore will involve a relatively low level of exertion, but you will need a reasonable level of mobility to get up and down the gangway and climb into and out of Zodiacs (with assistance).

For this tour we have a combined focus and most days offer a choice between wilderness adventures or arts and culture experiences, plus opportunities to enjoy local cuisine.

When the ship is underway, it is a wonderful time to join a naturalist on deck, take photos of the stunning scenery, or get caught up on some reading in the library. In addition, our resource staff will give informative talks at various times throughout the voyage.

Meals in the ship's dining room are a great opportunity to meet new friends and recount the day's adventures. Special diets can be accommodated with advance notice. Safety is also a top priority with Eagle-Eye Tours - our team has extensive experience in the field, and all of our Voyages are run in conjunction with operators with the highest safety standards. The Heritage Adventurer is equipped with a well-stocked hospital and medical doctor on voyages.

We know that everyone travels for different reasons. Over the years, however, we have found one common element among the guest who choose to travel with us - a thirst of knowledge and authentic experience. Knowing this drives us to ensure the highest quality learning experience on our trips, by taking time to carefully design each trip we offer.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- Landing fees
- Pre and post cruise transfers
- One-night hotel accommodation equivalent to your on board accommodation (incl. dinner/breakfast)
- All on board ship accommodation with meals
- House beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner
- All shore excursions and activities.
- Programme of lectures by noted naturalists

Tour Price Does Not Include

- All items of a personal nature (e.g., Laundry)
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- International/domestic flights
- Visas and travel insurance

