

BOOK BY MAY 29, 2026
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JAPAN

GOLDEN LEAVES & TIMELESS TRADITIONS
NOV 7-20, 2026 | 14 DAYS | 27 MEALS
JOURNEY LEADER: CATHY SEMLER

A national treasure, Himeji Castle stands tall with centuries of history.

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, is a fascinating blend of innovation and tradition that still feels like a mystery to many. While it's widely known for its leadership in electronics, automobiles, and heavy industry, what often gets overlooked are the rich layers of its history, culture, architecture, and arts. Japan is a multifaceted gem, with neon-lit modern cities, alpine villages nestled amidst mountain regions with pastoral scenery that appear untouched by the modern world, and relics of an imperial and feudal past, preserved for all to see. Experience the diverse landscapes of Japan on this fall journey, from bustling cities like Tokyo and Hiroshima to tranquil mountain retreats like Hakone, Takayama, and Shirakawago. Discover the historical and religious relics of Kyoto, Japan's imperial capital for nearly 1,000 years, and marvel at the temples of Nara. Immerse yourself in the timeless traditions of a ryokan (traditional inn) and be enchanted by the picture-perfect sights of several Japanese gardens.



Tour Highlights

- Experience Japan during the beautiful fall season, enjoying vibrant autumn colours while avoiding the peak season crowds
- Step into the past at the mountain village of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Enjoy a relaxing night in a traditional Ryokan (inn)
- Visit one of Japan's largest and most famous gardens, Kenroku-en, the "Garden of Six Qualities"
- Enjoy a tea ceremony in Kyoto
- Tour Hiroshima and nearby Miyajima island
- Visit Himeji Castle, Kyoto's Nijo Castle, and Nara plus other UNESCO World Heritage sites
- Discover the mountainous interior of Japan where life seems unchanged from centuries past
- Enjoy Japan's extensive and very efficient rail system, including bullet train rides
- Visit the Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji Temple) in Kyoto

Journey Leader

We are pleased to have **Cathy Semler** leading this exciting journey to Japan. Cathy retired as a high school principal after devoting 35 years to the teaching profession. She is a seasoned traveller who loves the opportunity to learn from new adventures. Her travels have taken her to Alaska, Australia, New Zealand, India, Costa Rica, Ireland, and various destinations throughout Europe. She enjoys visiting iconic cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, and London, as well as hiking in the mountains and cruising to different countries. Cathy is looking forward to this next adventure with you.



Inclusive Features

- Return economy group airfare from Canada to Narita (Tokyo)
- 12 nights in first-class hotels as indicated or similar, including 1 night in a traditional ryokan, a Japanese country inn
- 27 meals included as noted in the itinerary (B - 12 Breakfasts, L - 7 Lunches, D - 8 Dinners) featuring traditional Japanese dishes
- Transfers and intercity transportation by private coach and rail service, as indicated
- Services of your journey leader plus our professional Japanese tour guide
- All surcharges, taxes, and fees for included services
- Airport transfers in Canada or equivalent value with purchase of group airfare

NOV 7, Saturday

DEPART CANADA

Tour members from across Canada will gather in Vancouver for the overnight flight to Narita (Tokyo).

NOV 8, Sunday

TOKYO, JAPAN

Upon arrival in Tokyo, we'll transfer to our centrally located hotel. After settling in, we will gather for our welcome dinner. **New Otani Garden Hotel** (3 nights) D

NOV 9, Monday

KAMAKURA / TOKYO

After breakfast, we'll spend the day exploring Kamakura, the 13th-century capital and home to countless poets and artists. We'll visit Kotoku-in Temple to see the 13.35-metre-high Daibutsu, a giant bronze Buddha. Next, we'll explore Hasedera Temple, famous for its 9.18-metre gilded wooden statue of Kannon (goddess of mercy), and Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, a significant 12th-century shrine dedicated to Hachiman, the Shinto god of war. End the day shopping for local souvenirs and delicacies on Komachi Street before returning to the hotel. BL

NOV 10, Tuesday

TOKYO

Today, we'll enjoy a full-day tour of Tokyo's highlights. We'll begin at Asakusa, exploring Nakamise-dori and the Senso-ji Buddhist temple to learn about Japan's unique religious practices, with a photo stop at Asakusa Shinto shrine. Next, we'll visit the Tokyo Skytree for stunning city views. After a delicious lunch of kushiage (fried meat and vegetables on bamboo skewers), we head to the Ginza district, home to

some of the most expensive real estate in the world, for some free time to explore. Then, we'll visit the Imperial Palace East Gardens, home to 210,000 square metres of green space that is open to the public. We conclude our tour at the world's busiest intersection, Shibuya Crossing, where hundreds of people cross from all directions every time the signal changes. BLD

NOV 11, Wednesday

TOKYO / HAKONE

Departing Tokyo this morning, we journey south to the scenic region of Hakone, with the possibility of catching views of majestic Mt. Fuji along the way (weather permitting). Our first stop is Hakone Shrine, a serene 12th-century Shinto site once revered by samurai. Nestled in a forest, the shrine is famed for its striking torii gates that rise from the lakeshore. Following lunch at a local restaurant, we'll board a boat at Hakonesekisho-Ato and cruise to Hakone-En. From there, we travel by ropeway to the dramatic volcanic valley of Owakudani. You'll see steam vents and bubbling pools, and perhaps sample the famous eggs cooked in the hot sulfur springs, said to add years to your life! Later this afternoon, we arrive at our ryokan, a traditional Japanese inn. You'll experience authentic hospitality, sleeping on futons laid out on tatami mats, soaking in onsen baths fed by natural mineral springs, and enjoying a delicious Japanese dinner.

Hakone Yunohana Prince Hotel (1 night)

BLD

NOV 12, Thursday

HAKONE / TAKAYAMA

Today we board a bullet train to Nagoya, then switch to a limited express train to Takayama. Upon arrival, our private coach will take us sightseeing, beginning with the traditional wooden houses and shops along Kami Sannomachi Street. We'll also visit the Kusakabe Folk Museum, formerly the residence of the Kusakabe family (merchants who served the shogunate in Takayama), now recognized as an important cultural property. We'll then continue to our hotel for dinner.

Hotel and Spa Gift Takayama (2 nights)

BD

NOV 13, Friday

TAKAYAMA

Starting at the Miyagawa Morning Market, one of Japan's largest, we'll enjoy local crafts and produce from independent farmers and craftsmen. Takayama Jinya, the only surviving Edo-period government office, is now a museum showcasing well-preserved conference and interrogation rooms with century-old artifacts. Next, explore Hida Folk Village, a museum of rural homes and barns, offering insight into traditional lifestyles of a bygone era. At the Matsuri-no-Mori Museum, we learn about Takayama traditions, featuring massive yatai (parade floats) from the spring and autumn festivals. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure before we head out for dinner. BD

NOV 14, Saturday

SHIRAKAWAGO / KANAZAWA

Our first stop will be at the mountain village of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site noted for its traditional gassho-zukuri (thatched roof) farmhouses, some of which are over 250 years old. Visit the residence of the Iwase family, with its magnificent thatched roof. Later visit Washi Kaikan's Washi no Sato to observe the intricate and involved process of creating traditional Japanese paper (washi).

Daiwa Roynet Hotel Kanazawa Miyabi (1 night)

BD

NOV 15, Sunday

KANAZAWA / HIROSHIMA

Walk through one of Japan's most famous gardens, Kenroku-en, the "Garden of Six Qualities." It features stunning landscaping, flowering trees, and lakes. Visit the Hakuichi Gold Leaf Museum for a demonstration on the art of gold leaf application before travelling by bullet train to



Visit Fushimi Inari Shrine, voted a top must-see spot in Japan



Mt. Fuji vistas in the fall



Explore Shirakawago: home to 250-year-old thatched roof farmhouses



Discover Gion, where geishas still live and work

Hiroshima. A lunch box is provided to enjoy on board as you take in the scenic ride.

Grand Prince Hotel Hiroshima (2 nights) BL

NOV 16, Monday MIYAJIMA / HIROSHIMA

Today, we cross the Inland Sea by ferry to Miyajima Island, considered to be one of the top scenic experiences in Japan. On the island, we will ride the cable car to enjoy the incredible views from the peak and visit the Itsukushima-jinja Shrine dating from 1168 AD. Hiroshima is best remembered for the event of August 6, 1945, when the atomic bomb decimated the city and surrounding area. The Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Memorial Park are sobering testaments to the devastation and its aftermath. BL

NOV 17, Tuesday HIMEJI / KYOTO

Travel by bullet train to Himeji to visit of Himeji Castle, a 400-year-old UNESCO World Heritage Site and national treasure. Continue by coach to historic Kyoto, the capital of Japan for almost 1,000 years until 1868. This delightful city conjures up classic images: streets of little wooden houses, geta (wooden sandals) clicking on the cobblestones, geisha in brightly coloured silk, tea ceremonies, traditional gardens, and more.

Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo (3 nights) BLD

NOV 18, Wednesday KYOTO

Our day begins with a walk through the unique Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, one of Kyoto's most popular attractions, followed by the Kinkaku-ji Temple, or Golden Pavilion. The three-storey pagoda, covered in gold leaf, is set next to a tranquil reflecting pool and surrounded by gardens and pine forests. Nearby are the gardens and palace of Nijo Castle, a UNESCO Site noted for the great Ninomaru Wing and Audience Hall with its nightingale floors. Next, we will walk through the Higashiyama District, with its narrow cobblestone streets and tiny shops, and into the Gion, where geisha still live and work. Tonight enjoy a special kaiseki dinner at a local restaurant. BD

NOV 19, Thursday NARA / KYOTO

We'll start our day with a tea ceremony experience, learning about the various types of tea and the instruments used to prepare it. You'll discover the significance of each movement and the cultural importance of serving tea in Japan. Next, we'll visit Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto's Fushimi ward, famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates that form an iconic pathway through the sacred forest of Mount Inari. Before lunch, we'll head to the gracious town of Nara to visit Kasuga Taisha Shrine, founded in the 8th century to protect the capital. The shrine grounds feature around 3,000 stone lanterns, which are lit during special festivals. At Todaiji Temple, we'll explore Daibutsuden Hall, once the largest wooden building in the world, housing a great bronze seated Buddha. Enjoy a stroll through the peaceful Deer Park. Tonight, we will gather for a farewell dinner. BLD

NOV 20, Friday KYOTO / TOKYO / CANADA

After breakfast, we'll board a bullet train to Shinagawa, then transfer to Narita Airport (Tokyo) to catch our flights bound for Canada, arriving home the same day. B

CT Rating 3.5/5 - Challenging: This journey is designed to provide an in-depth exploration of all that is Japanese. It will feature an overnight stay in a Japanese ryokan (traditional inn), sleeping and eating in tatami-matted rooms, as well as a variety of different meals featuring traditional Japanese cuisine. By its nature, this journey involves a lot of walking, with some long walks and numerous visits involving many steps. To fully enjoy this journey, members should be fully mobile with **no walking limitations** and be in good physical health.



**Book by May 29, 2026
and save \$400 per person**



Cost in Canadian Dollars Per Person

Land Only* (Join / Leave at hotel).....	\$11,045
Toronto	\$13,345
Ottawa / Montreal	\$13,525
Halifax / St John's.....	\$13,595
Winnipeg / Regina / Saskatoon	\$13,095
Victoria / Vancouver	\$12,845
Calgary / Edmonton.....	\$12,995
Single Supplement	\$2,595

*Land-only price is based on joining at the hotel in Tokyo and leaving at the hotel in Kyoto and excludes flights and airport transfers. Airfares from other gateways are available on request. Air inclusive prices are estimated and subject to confirmation before final payment. Refer to inclusive features for details.

Tour price is based on sharing a twin room at hotels and on a minimum of 20 members, based on rates, taxes and fees effective May 2025 and are subject to change due to factors beyond our control. Group to be escorted from Canada with a minimum of 20 group members.

Insurance is NOT INCLUDED but is highly recommended. Premiums are calculated based on the individual's age, destination (country), trip length, and trip booking window – please contact our staff to receive a quote. Your coverage starts on the effective date of your confirmation of coverage. Please discuss your insurance coverage prior to booking. Check our website for the most current information. Refer to the enrollment form for terms and conditions.

Final payment is due July 30, 2026

Deposit is \$900 per person

To reserve your spot on this tour, you can either book online through our website or submit an enrollment form along with your deposit to:

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Special Note: Your main luggage will not be accessible for several nights on this journey. It will be required that you bring a small overnight bag for clothing and personal items during these stays. Please be aware that porter services are limited at some locations. Full details will be provided in the final travel documentation.