



# Land of Fire

SMALL-GROUP GUIDED TOUR

Our Land of Fire tour starts in Kyoto, former imperial capital and repository of much of Japan’s cultural heritage. We visit Asuka, where Japan’s early Emperors are buried, then a boat journey through the Inland Sea brings us to the southern island of Kyushu. Known as the cradle of Japanese civilization, several locations are connected with the Japanese creation myths which inspired the Yokagura dances in Takachiho.

Kyushu is also known for its numerous active volcanoes, as well as the spectacular island of Yakushima to the south, a national park and UNESCO World Heritage site. Unique flora and fauna can be admired here, including giant

Yakusugi cedars, Yakushima yakushika deer and yakuzaru macaques. A natural by-product of the volcanoes are onsen hot springs and we will enjoy relaxing dips in their soothing waters, as well as the unforgettable hot sand baths at Yamakawa where we are buried in hot sand. View Mount Aso with the world’s largest volcanic caldera and visit the vibrant city of Nagasaki.

Stay at traditional inns and guest-houses, enjoying dishes prepared with the freshest ingredients. Our tour ends amidst the crowds and neon of Osaka, Japan’s second city and culinary capital.

## DETAILS

### DATES & PRICES

Please see website

### TOUR LENGTH

15 days

### TYPE AND LEVEL OF TRIP

Active - Guided walking tour visiting Kyoto, Nagasaki, and Japan’s southern island of Kyushu. Accommodation in family-run minshuku, traditional ryokan, mountain lodges and hotels.

### WHAT’S INCLUDED

Transports including Bullet Train, accommodation, English-speaking tour guide, luggage forwarding, entrance fees, daily breakfast & 8 evening meals included

Not included are international flights, drinks with meals, lunches and airport transfers.



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## HIGHLIGHTS

Imperial Kyoto – Mount Aso, one of the world’s largest active volcanoes – Traditional Yokagura dances at Takachiho – Hot sand baths on the beach – Yakushima Island UNESCO World Heritage site – Nagasaki – Kumamoto – Accommodation in traditional ryokan – natural hot spring baths –gentle walks along country paths



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- 1 Yakushima
- 2 Glover Garden in Nagasaki
- 3 Hot sand baths
- 4 Peace Memorial, Nagasaki
- 5 Yakusugi cedar, Yakushima
- 6 Hot spring bath, Yakushima
- 7 Local friends, Yakushima

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## ITINERARY

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### DAY 1 > Meet in Kyoto

Meet your guide and other group members at the tour hotel in central Kyoto in the evening. There will be a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.  
**Accommodation:** Hotel

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### DAY 2 > Sightseeing in Kyoto

A full day to discover the ancient capital of Kyoto. We first visit Ginkakuji, the Silver Pavillion, walk along the Philosopher's path to Nanzen-ji Temple and then continue to Nijo Castle, originally the Kyoto residence for the Tokugawa Shoguns in the 17th century. Built in the 'momoyama' style, the wooden floors creak when walked on, apparently a security measure against intruders. After lunch, we will visit Nishiki market, to see the fish, crab, pickles, tea, sweets and other foodstuffs on display.  
**Accommodation:** Hotel

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### DAY 3 > Asuka & ferry

We take a short train ride from Kyoto south to Asuka, Japan's first permanent capital. Sitting at the southern edge of the Yamato Plain, Asuka is home to some of the first Buddhist temples in Japan, built by Prince Shotoku in the 6th century. The small town is also dotted with burial mounds, said to be those of the first Emperors. From Asuka we make our way to Osaka port, and catch the overnight ferry through the Seto Inland Sea to Beppu. On board we have private cabins and you can even enjoy a Japanese bath!  
**Hiking:** 5.3 km  
**Accommodation:** Ferry cabin

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### DAY 4 > Beppu & Kurokawa Hot Spring

Arriving in Beppu by sea is a dramatic and memorable experience. The city is surrounded by mountains, and steam from the abundant hot springs rises skyward to give it an otherworldly feel. After disembarking, we have breakfast at a local restaurant. We then board a bus for the 90 minute journey to Kurokawa Onsen, a hot spring village. We check in to our traditional ryokan, and enjoy a soak in one of the many hot spring baths in the village. Dinner will be another Japanese feast, prepared by the ryokan chef and presented as a multi-course banquet.  
**Accommodation:** Onsen Ryokan (Hot-spring Travellers Inn)

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### DAY 5 > Mount Aso & Takachiho

From Kurokawa Onsen we travel by private chartered coach to Takachiho. We can hope for views of Mount Aso, the largest active volcano in Japan and one of the



biggest in the world; the peaks of Taka-dake and Naka-dake dominate the Aso skyline. We pause at Shirakawa Springs, source of the Shirakawa River which flows through Kumamoto city, and the best-known of the natural springs in the Minami Aso area. Join locals and visitors sampling some of the most highly-regarded mineral water in Japan! We are based in Takachiho for two nights.  
**Accommodation:** Ryokan (Travellers Inn)

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### DAY 6 > Takachiho gorge

After breakfast at the ryokan, we will visit the shrine of Amanoiwado, literally the 'Shrine of the Sun Goddess'. From there, we will visit Takachiho gorge, which the town of Takachiho sits astride. It features a number of strange rock formations created by volcanic activity, which have become part of local folklore and the Japanese national creation myth. You will take a short walk along the gorge, and have a lunch at a small teahouse of sansai (mountain vegetables), grilled rainbow trout and grilled chicken, accompanied by shochu, a spirit made from sweet potato heated inside bamboo. You will have dinner at the ryokan, and then visit Takachiho shrine to see the Yokagura, sacred dances which tell the mythical story of Japan's creation.  
**Hiking:** 6 km  
**Accommodation:** Ryokan (Travellers Inn)

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### DAY 7 > Kumamoto & Kagoshima

Leaving Takachiho, we travel to Kumamoto to visit Suizen-ji Garden, a traditional landscape garden which includes a miniature Mount Fuji. After lunch we continue south to the city of Kagoshima, dramatically situated on Kagoshima Bay opposite Sakurajima, an active volcano. We visit Sangen-en, the lovely villa and gardens of the Shimizu clan. Kagoshima has a culture and cuisine distinct from other parts of Japan. Shochu, a spirit usually made from sweet potato is favoured over sake, and slow-baked 'kurobuta' (a breed of Berkshire pig) as well as grilled bonito (skipjack tuna) are two typical local dishes.  
**Accommodation:** Hotel

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**DAY 8 > Ibusuki and Hot Sand Baths**

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You will travel south this morning, by train along Kagoshima Bay, to the seaside town of Ibusuki, where thermally-heated mineral water bubbles up through the black volcanic sand on the beach. Locals mix the sand to ensure a steady temperature, and you will be able to wear a cotton yukata robe to sit in the warm sand and be covered. Very relaxing! Kagoshima Bay is a beautiful natural harbour, crowned at one end by Kaimondake, the 'little-Fuji' of Satsuma. We will then return to Kagoshima for dinner.

*Hiking:* 6.3 km

*Accommodation:* Hotel

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**DAY 9 > Travel to Yakushima Island**

From Kagoshima we travel by ferry to Yakushima Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The small population lives around the coast of this mountainous island, while the interior is almost totally undeveloped. Giant cedar – yakusugi – stand tall in the moss-laden forest, some of them thousands of years old. Two other endemic species are found here; the yakushika deer, and yakuzaru macaque. Around the coast are stunning beaches, and hot springs. We will stay at a local guesthouse to enjoy the local hospitality and evening meals prepared from the day's catch.

*Accommodation:* Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse)

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**DAY 10 > Yakushima Island**

We have a full day on Yakushima. We will hike into the interior, walking amongst the giant yakusugi trees, and if we are lucky spot some of the macaques. The oldest tree on Yakushima has been dated as 3,000 years old, and many of the trees have huge trunks, wider than a car. The centre of the island is a temperate rain-forest, and the highest peak on Yakushima is the tallest mountain in the south of Japan. It's a unique ecosystem and has escaped any significant development. The stunning Shiratani Unsuikyo ravine is a beautiful world of moss-covered boulders and majestic yakusugi trees. We will return by bus to our guesthouse in the evening.

*Hiking:* 5 km

*Accommodation:* Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse)

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**DAY 11 > Yakushima Island**

Our third day on Yakushima is spent visiting a lovely beach and one of the most spectacular hot springs in Japan, built into the rocks lapped by the waves. After lunch, we enjoy a short walk to on the trail to a charming hidden waterfall.

*Accommodation:* Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse)

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**DAY 12 > Nagasaki**

Leaving Yakushima by ferry, we board the shinkansen in Kagoshima and travel to Nagasaki. Famous throughout the world as the site of the bombing by atomic weapons in 1945, Nagasaki was during the 250-year period of seclusion known as 'sakoku' one of the only places in Japan open to foreign trade. After centuries as an international port, Nagasaki is today a vibrant, modern city. The city never forgets its past, however, and there are important memorials to its history. We check-in to our hotel and there will be free time before dinner.

*Accommodation:* Hotel

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**DAY 13 > Nagasaki**

This morning we will visit Dejima, the site of the former Dutch trading colony in Nagasaki. Dejima used to be an island, and Dutch traders were not allowed to live on the mainland. Dejima has been restored and you can see replicas of some of the original buildings. We then visit Sofuku-ji temple, built by Chinese settlers in the 17th century. We will have free time to relax and perhaps shop for souvenirs in the afternoon, or to visit the atomic bomb memorial.

*Accommodation:* Hotel

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**DAY 14 > Osaka**

We will visit the Glover Gardens this morning. This mansion and gardens with its wonderful views over Nagasaki were built for Thomas Glover, a Scottish entrepreneur who helped modernize Japan's shipbuilding and mining industries. The house and gardens, because of its reminiscence with Puccini's 'Madame Butterfly' opera, have statues of Puccini and Miura Tamaki, a Japanese operatic singer famed for who role as Cio-Cio-san. We will take a leisurely sightseeing walk in the morning around central Nagasaki, and after lunch we board the bullet train for our journey to Osaka. There will be free time to relax and perhaps shop for souvenirs, and in the evening there will be a farewell dinner.

*Accommodation:* Hotel

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**DAY 15 > Tour ends**

Our tour ends today after breakfast at the hotel in Osaka. Your guide will be on hand to offer assistance and advice for travelling to the airport if you have homeward flights, or on onward travel if you are extending your stay in Japan.