



solo connections





Colours of Japan
15 Days
Fully Escorted
Departs 05 November 2020

ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Tokyo
- Matsumoto
- Kurobe Alpine Route incl. Dam + Cable Car
- Tateyama Mountain Range
- Kanazawa
- Kenrokuen Gardens
- Shirakawa-Go Village
- Bullet Train to Kyoto
- Hiroshima
- Osaka

INCLUDES:

- Economy class airfares including taxes*
- **Private single rooms** in quality accommodation
- **Meals** as per itinerary – 12 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches, 8 Dinners
- **Sightseeing** tours and transfers by private vehicle
- **Tour Manager** – travels with group from/to Brisbane
- Local English speaking Tour Director and local guides
- **Tipping** for Guides & Drivers

EXCLUDES:

- Any meals other than mentioned above
- Items of a personal nature i.e. laundry, drinks, phone calls, etc
- Travel Insurance

From \$9,955* per person

Terms and Conditions apply. Price is per person Sole Use and subject to availability. Price is correct as at 13 September 2019. Based on Economy class airfare. Tour requires minimum number of passengers to depart. Prices may fluctuate if surcharges, fees, taxes or currencies change. Solo Connections is constantly striving to improve our itineraries and inclusions. If such improvements can be made, or unforeseen circumstances beyond our control make changes necessary, we reserve the right at any time to vary itineraries and to substitute inclusions of equal value. Beverages, additional meals, hotel mini bars, laundry, phone calls, any items of personal nature not included. Further booking conditions apply, please check all prices, availability and other information with your travel agent at time of or before booking. Package cancellation fees apply.

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Day 1 Thursday 05 November 2020
Depart Brisbane 11:25PM

Today meet your **Tour Manager** and fellow travellers at **Brisbane International Airport** for our flights (via Singapore) to Tokyo.

Day 2 Friday 06 November 2020
Arrive Tokyo 5:05PM

D

Kon'nichiwa – welcome to Japan! **Tokyo** is Japan's capital and the world's most populous metropolis. It is also one of Japan's 47 prefectures, consisting of 23 central city wards and multiple cities, towns and villages west of the city centre. Tokyo offers a seemingly unlimited choice of shopping, entertainment, culture and dining to its visitors. The city's history can be appreciated in districts such as Asakusa, and in many excellent museums, historic temples and gardens. Contrary to common perception, **Tokyo** also offers a number of attractive green spaces in the city centre and within relatively short train rides at its outskirts. On arrival this afternoon we will be met by our local tour guide who will accompany the group to the awaiting vehicle and transfer to our hotel. After checking into our rooms and a quick freshen up the group will meet for dinner tonight.

Accommodation: Tokyu Stay Hotel Ikebukuro (or similar) 3 Nights

Day 3 Saturday 07 November 2020
Tokyo

B-L

Breakfast is at our hotel this morning and then our local guide will collect us and we'll start our day with visiting **Meiji Jingu Shrine**. Established in 1920, the shrine is dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken and is the most popular shrine in Japan for the custom of *hatsumode* - the year's first visit to a shrine or temple to pray for good fortune in the year ahead.

After visiting the shrine, we'll change the pace and visit **Harajuku**, a seat of **youth culture** where stylish items are readily available. Jam-packed with stores selling assorted goods, accessories, and clothes, the area is renowned for colorful street art and youth fashion, with quirky vintage clothing stores and cosplay shops. Takeshita-dori Street is constantly crowded with shoppers. Just a short walk away is the more sophisticated area of Omotesando Street. Artistic **fashion** buildings and **galleries** line up along the elm tree-lined street, where you can enjoy shopping, gourmet food and art. We'll have lunch in the area today before transferring back to our hotel. The rest of the afternoon and this evening is at leisure and your Tour Manager is on hand to discuss with the group what options everyone might like to explore for dinner tonight.

Day 4 Sunday 08 November 2020
Tokyo

B-D

Today is at **leisure** in **Tokyo** and your options are endless. Your Tour Manager will discuss with you what you might like to do as a group today. Tonight the group will have dinner at a local restaurant.



Day 5 Monday 09 November 2020
Matsumoto

B-L-D

Today we begin our journey through the **Japanese Alps** by first visiting the city of **Matsumoto** which sits just to the east. This morning we will transfer from our hotel to Shinjuku station where we will catch the **Limited Express Azusa** train for the journey to Matsumoto (about 2.5 hours). (Our luggage will transfer directly to Kanazawa today so we'll take an overnight bag with us.) There is a chance to see Mt Fuji from the train today. Matsumoto has always been a very popular destination for visitors for its natural beauty and art. It is most famous for Matsumotojo, one of Japan's most beautiful original fortresses and a national treasure. When we arrive at Matsumoto station, we'll take a walk through the town and have lunch before our coach takes us to visit the castle.

Matsumotojō is a "hirajiro" - a castle built on plains rather than on a hill or mountain. It is unique for having both a secondary donjon and a turret adjoined to its main keep. Matsumoto's black, wooden keep (donjon) is the oldest such structure in Japan, dating from 1595, and the black paint gave the castle its nickname "Karasujo" (Crow Castle). The dark colour was designed to terrorize approaching opponents. This afternoon we'll travel by coach for about an hour to **Shinano Omachi** where we will stay overnight. **Omachi Onsen** town is a popular Onsen (Hot spring) spot and tonight we will stay in a Japanese style room (with private facilities).

Accommodation: Kurobe Kanko Hotel (or similar) 1 Night

Day 6 Tuesday 10 November 2020
Alpine Route to Kanazawa

B-D

Today we will travel the **Kurobe Tateyama Alpine Route** through the Japanese Alps. This is an extraordinary journey with an amazing array of transportation today! First up is a short bus ride to **Ogizawa**, the entrance of the Alpine Route. The Alpine Route is a unique and spectacular route through the **Northern Japan Alps** which is traversed by various means of transportation including cable cars, trolley buses and a ropeway. Completed in 1971, the route connects **Omachi Town** in Nagano Prefecture with **Toyama City** in Toyama Prefecture. The section between Tateyama Station and Ogizawa is closed to private vehicles and the whole route is inaccessible in the winter.

On our arrival to **Ogizawa** today we will take the **electric bus** through the long tunnel to **Kurobe Dam** - Japan's highest dam at 186 meters. The tunnel was built during the construction of the dam and the bus trip takes around 16 minutes. Once at the dam we will walk along the **walk-way**, built in the edge of the dam – a walk of around 15 minutes. We then take a ride on the **Kurobe Cable Car** (the only fully underground cable car in Japan) – about 5 minutes and then a 7 minute trip on the **Tateyama Ropeway**. The Tateyama Rope Way will be one of the highlights on the day and provide stunning views of the Alps. We then take the **Tateyama Tunnel trolley bus** for about 10 minutes as we approach Murodo - the highest point along the Alpine Route. At 2450 meters above sea-level, **Murodo** offers fantastic views of the **Tateyama Mountain Range**. Lunch can be purchased from one of the cafes at the station as we sit and enjoy the view. After lunch we will begin our descent down the mountain to Toyama. Firstly around 50 minutes on the Highland Bus and then a 7 minute ride on the **Tateyama Cable Car** which will cover 1.3km and a 500metre descent, and lastly by train on the **Toyama Chiho Railroad**. At the end of this very memorable journey we will reach Kanazawa and check into our hotel.



Kanazawa is the capital city of Ishikawa Prefecture and sits on the Sea of Japan, bordered by the Japanese Alps. As it is one of the few major cities in the country that was spared from the fire-bombing in World War II, it is the best-preserved **Edo Period** city in Japan and has wonderfully preserved art and culture. Dinner tonight will be at our hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel Mystays Premier Kanazawa (or similar) 4 Nights

Day 7 Wednesday 11 November 2020

B-D

Kanazawa

A leisurely start today as we catch our breath after a long day yesterday. If you're keen to get out and about your Tour Manager will be on hand to offer suggestions on how to spend the morning. Early this afternoon we'll be met by our local guide for a city tour. We'll visit **Kenrokuen Garden** – the city's most famous attraction. Extending over almost 25 acres, it was once the outer garden of **Kanazawa Castle**, but was opened to the public in 1874. Famous as one of Japan's "three best landscape gardens" and considered by many to be the most beautiful of them all, here we will find colourful seasonal displays, streams, ponds, waterfalls, stone lanterns, and historical tea houses. After enjoying the garden we will then visit the **Higashi Chaya-gai District** - a beautifully preserved historical area of Kanazawa with many traditional wooden buildings, established in 1820 as an entertainment district for rich merchants and nobility. The name literally means "**Eastern Teahouse District**," because the chaya, or teahouses, were where wealthy customers would be entertained by geisha with traditional music, dancing, and drinking games. Many of these buildings have today been converted into restaurants or souvenir craft shops, but there are two geisha teahouses that are open to the public during the day. Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant.

Day 8 Thursday 12 November 2020

B-D

Shirakawa-Go

Today we'll explore some rural areas of the Japanese Alps. The famed thatch-roof village of **Shirakawa-go** is a **UNESCO World Heritage** site nestled amongst the mountains and famous for traditional **gassho-zukuri farmhouses**, some of which are more than 250 years old. It is located in a mountainous region that was cut off from the rest of the world for a long period of time and the villages subsisted on the cultivation of mulberry trees and the rearing of silkworms. The large houses with their steeply pitched thatched roofs are the only examples of their kind in Japan. Despite economic upheavals, the villages are outstanding examples of a traditional way of life perfectly adapted to the environment and people's social and economic circumstances. Lunch today will be at a local restaurant. After enjoying the visit to Shirakawa-Go, we drive to **Gokayama**, a similar mountain village but a little less developed and here we can stroll around and soak up the atmosphere.

Returning to our hotel late this afternoon, dinner tonight will be at leisure and your Tour Manager will ensure everyone who wants to be is included in any arrangements.

Day 9 Friday 13 November 2020

B-D

Kanazawa

Today is at leisure in **Kanazawa**. Your Tour Manager will have some suggestions of what everyone might like to do today or you might have some ideas of your own. You might like to spend some more time soaking in the beauty of Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa is a relatively compact city with a fine group of sights located around a green core formed by Kanazawa Castle Park and the garden. The **Omincho Markets** are packed with a multitude of stalls selling locally caught seafood, as well as a good selection of fruit and vegetables and other Japanese foodstuffs. And, best of all, there are



plenty of restaurants in the market where you can sample some of the foodstuffs you see on sale. For dinner tonight the group will dine together at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyoto Shijo (or similar) 4 Nights

Day 10 Saturday 14 November 2020
Kanazawa - Kyoto

B-D

A leisurely morning today. Our luggage will be collected and will travel separately to meet us in **Kyoto**. This afternoon we will transfer to Kanazawa Station by public transportation with our guide and take the express train to Kyoto. The **Thunderbird Express** takes about two and a quarter hours and we will be met by our Kyoto guide when we arrive. Kyoto is a city of some 2000 temples and is the cultural and spiritual heart of Japan. The city has a large cultural legacy coming from its **1200 year-long history** and age old traditions mingle effortlessly with modern metropolis. We'll transfer to our hotel on arrival and dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant.

Day 11 Sunday 15 November 2020
Kyoto

B-L

Today we will cover the must-see spots in **Kyoto**, this cultural capital of Japan. Our first stop this morning will be **Kinkakuji Temple** - a Zen temple in northern Kyoto whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Formerly known as **Rokuonji**, the temple was the retirement villa of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, and became a Zen temple of the Rinzaï sect after his death in 1408. Kinkakuji is an impressive structure built overlooking a large pond, and is the only building left of Yoshimitsu's former retirement complex.

We'll then visit **Nijo Castle**, built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the **Edo Period** (1603-1867). After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace for a while before being donated to the city and opened up to the public as a historic site. Its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan's feudal era, and the castle was designated a **UNESCO** world heritage site in 1994. After lunch today at a local restaurant we'll return to the hotel where the rest of the afternoon and dinner tonight are at leisure. Your **Tour Manager** will ensure anyone who wants to be included in whatever arrangements the group decides on for this evening.

Day 12 Monday 16 November 2020
Hiroshima

B-L

This morning we will transfer to Kyoto Station to take the world famous **Bullet Train** (Shinkansen) to Hiroshima. The trip takes about 2 hours. On arrival in **Hiroshima** Station, we will take in the city highlights including a visit to the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park & Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum**. Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park is in the center of Hiroshima and is dedicated to the legacy of Hiroshima as the first city in the world to suffer a nuclear attack, and to the memories of the bomb's direct and indirect victims. After visiting the Peace Park, lunch today will be at a local restaurant. This afternoon we'll visit **Miyajima Guchi** by train and then ferry boat. Miyajima is known as one of the most scenic spots in Japan, and has long been regarded as an Island of Gods on the beautiful **Seto Inland Sea**. It is a romantic and historical island where the **Itsukushima Shrine**, (a World Heritage site) is located, along with the Virgin Forest of Mt. Misen, and numerous preserved shrines, temples and historical monuments. Today we'll visit the Itsukushima Shrine, which is famous



for the view of its floating **Torii Gate**. (Please note the Torii Gates are under renovation until late 2020). Returning to Kyoto late this afternoon dinner tonight is at leisure.

Day 13 Tuesday 17 November 2020
Osaka

B-D

Today we'll take a train to **Osaka** to see some of the attractions of this powerhouse city. Our first stop of the tour will be at **Osaka Castle**, known as a symbol of Osaka. Our guide will show us around this gigantic castle, and why Toyotomi Hideyoshi (founder of the castle and a 16th century Samurai Leader) was so powerful. After visiting the castle, we will transfer to **Namba**, the high-energy entertainment district the old downtown of Osaka. Here the busy streets are full of unique neon signs plus hundreds of restaurants and shops. This afternoon we travel by train back to Kyoto, where tonight we will enjoy our farewell dinner in this wonderful country.

Day 14 Wednesday 18 November 2020
Depart Osaka 4:55PM

B

Standard checkout time applies today but our belongings can be left with the hotel until our departure time. The day is at leisure so time for some last minute shopping perhaps or that last sightseeing in Kyoto, before the group is collected and transferred to the airport in time for the flight home. New friends and a host of memories made. Farewell Japan.

Day 15 Thursday 19 November 2020
Arrive Brisbane 10:35AM