



Ryokan, Onsen, Food & Culture Tour

23~28 May 2020

Day 1: Saturday May 23

Meet your tour leader and fellow travellers in Fukuoka city. There are two pick up points: Fukuoka Airport at 9AM or Hakata Station at 10AM. First stop is the observatory overlooking Karatsu city. Enjoy a birds-eye view of the ocean and the one-million-tree pine forest. We then descend from the observatory and take a scenic drive through this huge seaside forest. For lunch in this seaside town experience the freshest sushi served by a professional sushi chef. After lunch we explore the imposing Karatsu Castle towering high above the town. In the afternoon we revive ourselves with matcha green tea complemented with a sweet Japanese dainty. Sip your tea and enjoy the beautiful garden view. Before heading to your accommodation, the final stop of the day is Kyushu's most well-known rice field sunset view (if Mother Nature obliges). After check-in, dinner will be based around the fisherman's catch of the day (the local specialty is 'live' squid sashimi).

Overnight in Yobuko (Ryokan Onoue or similar)



Day 1: Observatory, ocean and forest

Day 2: Sunday May 24

With an early start we take the chance to visit the local harbour. Enjoy strolling the stalls at the traditional morning market. Next we'll take a short boat cruise and get some sea air around the coast. We continue our journey south, stopping en-route at a Shinto shrine containing a huge sacred camphor tree that has stood for an amazing 3000 years! Lunch today is a bowl of champon noodles. This dish originated in Kyushu and has been beloved by generations of locals. After lunch we head to the 'Village of the Secret Kilns'. This isolated mountain village has been producing pottery for 100's of years. Explore the narrow lanes, galleries and pottery workshops where hand-painted pottery is still common. Our accommodation today is in the tea-producing *onsen* (natural hot-spring bathing) town of Ureshino. Let's take a quick look at a green tea plantation before checking in to our *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn). Spend as long as you can in the *onsen* bath to reap the most benefit. The waters in this town are some of the most famous in Japan for their beautifying effects on the skin. You can really feel the softness of the water as you bathe. Enjoy a wonderful Japanese multi-course dinner with quality local beef as the highlight.

Overnight in Ureshino (Ryokan Ohmuraya or similar)



Day 2: 'Village of the Secret Kilns'

Day 3: Monday May 25

In the morning we visit one of Kyushu's most impressive shrines and pass by some classic red Japanese 'torii' gates stretching out to the ocean. You'll get some great photos! We drive along the coast of Ariake Sea which has the biggest tidal difference in Japan. It is famous for the freshness and quality of the seafood caught here, especially the crab, so of course that is what we will have for lunch. We continue our journey, passing from Saga prefecture into Nagasaki prefecture. Before check in, enjoy a short ropeway ride to the top of Mt. Myoken. Hopefully nature will bless us with a display of pretty, *miyamakirishima* (Kyushu azalea) blossoms. Check into your *ryokan* with powerful, sulphurous *onsen* baths. You should be able to feel a clear difference in the character of the water from yesterdays' Ureshino onsen water. Enjoy a wonderful multi-course meal for dinner.

Overnight in Unzen (Fukudaya or similar)



Day 3: Wonderfully photogenic shrine

Day 4: Tuesday May 26

Start the morning with a walk in Unzen Hells. It is an unforgettable experience wandering through the boiling and bubbling volcanic landscape as smelly sulphur steam rises all around. Feel free to spend a moment at the cross erected in remembrance of the area's 17th century Christian martyrs. From the natural volcanic landscape we move to see the remains of buildings buried in a most recent volcanic disaster. For lunch let's try the local favourite of *Guzoni*; rice-cake soup with veggies. After lunch enjoy a scenic ferry ride over to Kumamoto prefecture where we head to the riverside. If our timing is right, it should be most beautiful at this time of the year with 60,000 elegant purple iris flowers [note: if the iris aren't in bloom we will substitute with a short Shimabara city tour]. We will stay in yet another *onsen* town renowned for high quality spring water. Enjoy bathing in the soft and healing waters of Yamaga Onsen. As a special treat each room will have a private in-room *onsen* bath! Enjoy another tasty and hearty Japanese dinner.

Overnight in Yamaga Onsen (Yunokura or similar)



Day 4: The boiling, bubbling Unzen Hells



Day 5: Traditional theatre

Day 5: Wednesday May 27

Today we get the opportunity to tour a traditional Japanese theatre in Yamaga town. Few of these theatres still survive so this is a rare opportunity [note: 2020 schedule not released yet so this tour cannot be guaranteed, alternative activity may be arranged]. You will have some free time strolling around the traditional shops of this bygone town. Our final lunch will be the healthy, traditional dish of *kamameshi* (rice cooked and served in an iron pot). After lunch we'll do a tour and tasting at a traditional saké brewery. Saké lovers can pick up a bottle of their award-winning brew. We then return to Fukuoka, where your hotel is located in the very heart of the main shopping and dining area. The evening is your free and easy time for shopping, dining or nightlife. Your tour leader can give advice about where to go for the evening to suit your budget and taste.

Overnight in Fukuoka (Nishitetsu Inn or similar)

Day 6: Thursday May 28

Check out 10AM, end of tour.

If you want to stay one or more extra nights in Fukuoka city before or after this tour we can help make the arrangements.



Fukuoka nightlife



Tour Price

¥219,000 (Japanese Yen) per person

Early-bird discount: book before 31 Dec 2019 and pay only ¥199,000!

Price is based on double/twin/triple sharing
For staying in a room alone add ¥89,000

Inclusions

Accommodation 5 nights
Breakfast x5, Lunch x5, Dinner x4
English-speaking tour leader
All transport in private tour bus
All entrance fees

Exclusions

Flights
Dinner final night, any alcohol and snacks

Frequently Asked Questions

What kind of accommodation will I stay?

You will stay in Japanese-style accommodation for the first 4 nights. For the 5th night you will stay in a Western hotel in central Fukuoka. Rooms will be 2-3 pax per room depending on the size of your travelling party. You will only share a room with your family or friends.

What kind of food is served on the tour?

This tour focuses on traditional Japanese cuisine with an emphasis on locally sourced produce. You will enjoy a wide variety of seafood and Kyushu-reared beef.

What is 'onsen' bathing?

An *onsen* is a bathing pool using water from natural hot-springs. It is a wonderful pleasure with many health benefits. Please note you will be required to be naked while bathing and baths are sex-segregated. If you feel uncomfortable bathing naked in public, or prefer to bathe with a loved one, we may be able to arrange a private bath for you (if available, and subject to an additional charge). Contact us for more information about this.

How will I travel around?

Private bus throughout the tour.

Who will lead the tour?

This is a rare opportunity to join a tour personally planned and guided by the Kyushu Journeys founder. [Moo](#) is a Kyushu local so take the chance to learn from her extensive knowledge of Kyushu and the local cuisine.

How many people can join this tour?

We want this to be a small group intimate tour. Maximum participants will be 10 pax plus any children sharing a room with their parents.

What is the cancellation charge?

- 30 days or more before: 20%
- 29 - 8 days before: 30%
- 7 - 3 days before: 50%
- 2 days before or later: 100%

What's the next step

We can hold you place(s) on the tour without any payment while you check your flights. Email us (letsgo@kyushujourneys.com) and inform us how many participants. We will inform you next steps and full Terms & Conditions.