



**Celebrating Love & Culture in the Land of the Rising Sun!
With Shasta & Greg Nelson in Japan**

August 28- September 9th, 2025

We start our trip in Tokyo for 3 full days/4 nights. This capital city is famous for bright lights, Anime, electronics, manga, fashion, busy intersections, Michelin star food, ancient temples, etiquette, tall skyscrapers, themed cafes, and cleanliness. In the largest city on earth, with a population of over 37 million (4x the population of NYC), our time in this busy and bright city is going to be packed with unique experiences!

August 28th Arrival in Tokyo (Dinner)

Transfer from Haneda International Airport in Tokyo to our 4-star hotel: Mitsui Garden Hotels
<https://www.gardenhotels.co.jp/toyosu-premier/eng/>

5:00pm Orientation Meet & Greet

6:30pm Welcome Dinner

August 29th Explore Tokyo (Breakfast, Lunch, Sake Tasting)

Breakfast at your leisure at our hotel

9:00am We are off to explore this fascinating city by bus. We will start with a stop at the Imperial Palace to understand the history of this country & to experience the beautiful esthetic garden landscapes. Afterward we will stop at Tokyo Tower to enjoy the main observation platform where we get a sweeping panoramic view of the city.

12:30pm Lunch

2:00pm Explore the serenity of the Meiji Shrine, one of Japan's most popular Shinto shrines. We will learn about the "way of the gods" & the learnings of this religion with our guide. After wandering the Shrine, the couples will look for their *en-musubi*, or Japanese love charm, which is one of several Omamori charms that are said to bring luck and good fortune to those who possess them. A fun way for us to immerse ourselves in the local spirit of love. Your Japanese love charm awaits.

4:00pm Let's enjoy a fun Sake tasting and learn about this famous national Japanese rice wine.

5:30 pm Your evening is free to rest, explore or join us at a group reservation for dinner.

August 30th Day Trip to Mount Fuji (Breakfast, Lunch)

We are off on the bullet train to Mt. Fuji and the lesser-known Hakone five lakes area for a full day excursion. *Mount Fuji* symbolizes purity, perseverance, and eternity.

We start by enjoying a picturesque boat cruise. Then we will have lunch. Afterwards we will take the cable car, the Mt. Fuji Panoramic Ropeway, up the mountain to the observation deck, join in some activities based on local folktales and marvel at the beautiful views. We will then return to our hotel in Tokyo .

Evening Free to explore local places for dinner.

August 31st Amae, River Cruise & Opera (Breakfast, Lunch)

10:30 am Our journey continues at the Hama Rikyu Garden, where we will learn about the Edo period. After that, we will enjoy a Sumida River Cruise to Asakusa. Asakusa feels like an "old Tokyo" with traditional craft shops and street-food stalls along Nakamise Street near the ancient Sensō-ji temple. We will have lunch here at a local restaurant & enjoy some time to shop the famous Nakamise shopping street. We will convene at the Sensouji Asakusa Kannon Temple. As we make our way back to the hotel for time to rest and change, we will point out important markers, from the Tokyo Skytree, Kappabashi Street Ueno & Akihabara. Today our local host will also share about the philosophy of Amae, which depends on the benevolence and kindness of others. This will help you understand the modern Japanese cultural patterns governing social relationships, friendships & love.

4:30pm We wrap up our stay in Tokyo learning about the 400-year-old Japanese dance-drama art of Kabuki at the Kabuki-za Theater.

Dinner is free to enjoy with your partner - we will be happy to give suggestions for dinner if you want. However since we will be in Ginza we suggest experiencing the nightlife and beautiful lights ablaze. You can cab back at your leisure or we will drop you after the theater.

Our second homebase in Japan will be in Kanazawa, where we'll stay for 4 full days/4 nights. Kanazawa has been the cradle of Japanese traditional culture and arts for the last 4 centuries! We'll find many local artisans keeping up the old traditions and innovating new ways to infuse life with their art. Here, we'll experience geishas, ryokans (traditional lodging), samurais, and onsens (hot springs)!

September 1st **Kanazawa with Geisha Welcome** (Breakfast, Dinner)

9:00am This morning you have 2 options:

Enjoy a brief visit to the National Museum for an overview of Japanese History.

Or spend this morning resting, walking the streets, or enjoy some free time for shopping & lunch on our own. (You can also eat lunch at the train station as that's very common and popular!)

Afternoon bullet train to Kanazawa (2.5 hours) We will check in our traditional Ryokan upon arrival.

Evening Meal & Geisha exchange: This once-in-a-lifetime experience is designed to share this enchanting tradition with those who are curious about the Japanese women and girls who have been trained to provide entertaining and enjoyable company for men. Meetings last 90 minutes with Sake and Tea served. Enjoy dinner together!

September 2nd **Kanazawa Culture & Arts** (Breakfast, Lunch)

9:00am Explore this UNESCO city of arts and culture! Our city tour includes Geisha and Samurai districts, a tour of the Kanazawa castle, a stop at the Omicho fish market and more. We will visit local artisans, ceramics & lacquer shop makers, & have time to shop or people watch.

[Perhaps here we can split up and visit a local home for tea. \(here we may bring gifts\)](#)

Evening Tonight we will enjoy the peace at our ryokan. Ryokan are Japanese-style inns found through the countryside that typically feature tatami-matted rooms and traditional Japanese hospitality. Many, including ours, also feature onsen— which are natural hot spring baths!

September 3rd **Explore the Region: Hirakawago & Takayama** (Breakfast, Lunch)

9:00am We are off for a day-long excursion to the UNESCO alpine village of Shirakawago, followed by the beautiful hamlet of Hida Furukawa, and then onward to

Takayama. We will explore the narrow merchant streets of Takayama while learning about its relevance during Edo times. This mountainous region is rich in culture and tradition and has become a must-see on the rural route of Japan.

We'll also visit a rice farm to learn about the rich and deep rice culture in this country. We will also have free time for an optional 90 min bike ride, please let us know if you'd like to do this!

5:00pm Return back to Kanazawa

7:00pm Evening free to rest, explore the town and enjoy dining in one of many local restaurants.

September 4th The Culture of Samurai & Tea (Breakfast Lunch, & Tea)

9:00am Morning Options:

- Hike up Mount Utatsu. The slope leading up starts with Utastu Shrine, then we will hike to reach Hosen-ji Temple. The trek is worth it for the view. (about 1.5 hrs.)
- Or enjoy a free morning for rest & personal exploration as we have a very full afternoon!

11:30am Brief visit to learn about the history of the Samurai at the museum. Samurai are the traditional aristocratic warriors, members of the powerful military caste in feudal Japan.

1:00 pm lunch in the Samurai district.

3:00pm Afternoon Kanazawa tea ceremony! Experience a unique and private Tea Ceremony where once Samurai met before battle. We will learn about the tea ceremony culture as we experience a private authentic tea ceremony and ritual in this secluded garden just outside Kenrokuen Gardens. Following our Tea Ceremony, we will take you through the Kenrokuen Gardens to explore Japanese feudal life.

7:00pm Evening free

Our third and final hotel will be in Kyoto where we'll stay for 4 full days and 4 nights. With over 1,200 years of history (and the former capital of Japan) Kyoto is world famous for its numerous temples, shrines, and palaces. But here, amidst the bustle of one of the most iconic cities in the country, we'll also be immersing ourselves in some super unique beauty and restorative practices to ensure we end our trip feeling as recharged as possible!

September 5th **Water Cleansing Ritual** (Breakfast, Lunch)

9:00am After breakfast we'll check out as we're off to experience the Misogi Shinto Ritual. Learn about the significance of spiritual rejuvenation of this water cleansing. This is an ancient practice to purify the mind, body, and spirit through physical and mental challenges. This ancient process takes about 3 hours from start to finish.

After, we will have time for lunch then we continue our drive to the City of Kyoto (total of about 3 1/2 hour drive from Kanazawa to Kyoto).

Check in to our hotel & enjoy time to dine!

September 6th **Full Day Experiencing Kyoto** (Breakfast, Lunch)

9:00am Get to know this amazing city by exploring so many highlights! We start at Fushimi-Inari (Temple of 1000 Gates) & Kinkaku-ji (The Golden Pavilion) where we will leisurely visit, walk and have time for beautiful pictures. After lunch we are off to Kennin-ji, on the east side of Kyōto, and not too far from Kiyomizu-dera, one of the "Five Great Zen Temples" and thought to be the oldest Zen temple in the city, dating back to 1202. You will get your steps in today!

4:00pm Optional: This afternoon we will have fun at our Wagashi workshop. This treat is a famous traditional Japanese confectionery. From olden times, imaginative, original, beautiful, and delicate wagashi has been created as the tea ceremony culture thrived in Kanazawa and Kyoto. Make your own handmade Japanese confectionery to take home!

Evening You are free to explore with your honey this evening! If you want, we can leave you in the Gion district of Kyoto, one of most "romantic" places in Japan & a heritage site full of Japanese art and architecture, and famous geisha entertainment.

September 7th **Relaxing at an Onsen** (Breakfast, Dinner)

9:00am Located just 30 minutes from the heart of Kyoto, we are off to enjoy the Kurama Hot Spring. This is one of the most popular onsen in the region. The Kyoto onsen's outdoor baths look out on lush, wooded mountains, and many visitors to the hot spring come to enjoy a soak after a day of hiking. You will have time to rest, bath, hike and grab lunch.

4:00pm Rest in hotel

6:00-8:00pm Dinner tonight is a fun walking food tour of Kyoto!

September 8th Forest Bathing & Free Time (Breakfast, Dinner)

9:00am This morning we will enjoy 'forest bathing' in Arashiyama - the famous Sagano Bamboo Forest. "Forest bathing" originated in Japan and involves slow, mindful sensory connection activities while walking to reap the benefits of nature. Stroll peacefully along paths lined with endless rows of towering bamboo. The experience has been described as dreamlike.

We will finish our journey at the Jishu-Jinja Shrine - it is the oldest shrine in Kyoto for the gods (kami) of love and relationships (En-musubi). We can make our last wishes for our love & futures.

1:00pm Lunch & free time for shopping.


5:00pm Wrap-up Circle.

7:00pm Farewell dinner!

September 9th Head Home! (Breakfast)

am Check out & transfer to the airport in Osaka International Airport (also called Itami Airport) which is around 36 km from Kyoto. We will have 2 transfers organized.

Or, stay and travel a few extra days on your own, possibly heading back to Tokyo and flying out from there!

This Journey is Powered by ...  AltruVistas