JAPAN BY RAIL
AUTUMN COLOURS

Scenic rail tour around Japan in the season of autumn colours
- nature, culture, history, art and food -

Friday 15 October – Sunday 7 November 2027

Join us for our **Autumn Colours tour** to Japan – a twenty-three day experience of autumn **colours** on the Japanese islands of Honshu, Hokkaido and Shikoku. Enjoy **lovely hot spring resorts;** travel in **Green Cars (first class) on the high speed 'Shinkansen' trains** – making your journey relaxed, exhilarating and very comfortable; experience **scenic rail journeys** through colourful forests; and explore the rich **culture** and **history** of the country, with **gardens**, famed **textiles**, **art** and **food**, and **options for walking in nature**. Experience a range of accommodations from modern city hotels, convenient simpler business hotels, **traditional onsen resorts (ryokan)** and enjoy a range of included meals, some special dining occasions and freedom to dine when, with whom and where you wish. Enjoy **local cuisine at 'Izakaya' restaurants** and **great meals featuring local produce**. Even if you've been to Japan before, you'll visit different locations and gain **a deeper cultural experience**. The tour is designed and led by Japanese expert **Takako Ishige,** who with **Owen Johnstone-Donnet** have researched and organised the tour. We are proud and passionate about our tours - we make it possible to experience the real Japan, **not only iconic cities and sights, but also 'off the beaten track' small villages and islands**, meeting local people.

Friday 15 October 2027 - to Japan

Begin your experience of Japanese culture aboard a daylight flight from Sydney to Tokyo with Japan Airlines or All Nippon Airlines, or from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane with Qantas. Alternatively fly overnight on Thursday 14 October 2027 with Qantas or All Nippon Airlines from Sydney and arrive in Tokyo the following morning. Check in to the hotel and enjoy the vibrant city of Tokyo at leisure. (Please note early check in to hotels requires a prior night being booked at additional cost.) The tour fare includes transfer from Tokyo Airport to our hotel – depending on flight arrivals, the tour leaders will meet and escort the group, or transfer will be individually by taxi. Overnight Tokyo.

Saturday 16 October 2027 (B/D) – Tokyo sightseeing

After breakfast we introduce you to some of the **highlights of Tokyo,** Japan's capital and the world's most populous metropolis. We will show you the old and new - the historical Tokyo Station; the world's busiest pedestrian crossing and famous Hachiko dog in Shibuya; Harajuku - the centre of teenage and cosplay culture; the Emproer's shrine Meiji Jingu and the peacefulness of a city park; the fully automated driverless Yurikamome crossing Tokyo Harbour; and more! There is too much to see in a day, so if specific museums appeal, let us know so we can arrange for you to visit them independently. We also need to organise the important process of the Japan Rail Pass exchange and collect our rail reservations for the tour. After a full day getting a taste of Japan's capital, with its energy and buzz - enjoy our first group dinner which is included. Overnight Tokyo.

Sunday 17 October 2027 (B/D) – Shinkansen to Unazuki Onsen

After a relaxing breakfast we walk to Tokyo Station, where there is time to purchase some luncheon to enjoy on the rail journey from one of the many excellent food outlets inside the station. As we await our departure on the platform, witness the 'seven-minute miracle' - the incredibly fast and highly coordinated cleaning operation performed on Shinkansen trains at Tokyo Station. A specialized cleaning team—usually about 20 to 30 workers—has just seven minutes to completely service an entire train: they pick up trash, rotate seats, wipe tables, clean floors, check overhead racks, and reset everything for the next departure. The process is choreographed down to the second, with each staff member responsible for a precise set of cars, and it's often praised worldwide as a symbol of Japanese efficiency, teamwork, and pride in public service. We then commence our travel in Japan with a journey from Tokyo to Kurobe-Unazukionsen, aboard the **excellent Japanese high speed 'Shinkansen' service**. Running at speeds of up to 320 km/h, it is known for punctuality (most trains depart on time to the second), comfort (we travel in 'green car' - first class), safety and efficiency - it is an exhilarating and comfortable experience. On arrival at Kurobe-Unazuki Onsen Station we change to the narrow gauge private railway for the thirty-minute journey to the onsen town of Unazuki Onsen, nestled in the foothills of the **Tateyama Mountain Range**. Unazuki Onsen is a serene hot-spring village known as the gateway to the dramatic Kurobe Gorge. The town blends traditional ryokan, riverside open-air baths, and quiet streets with a backdrop of forested hills that blaze with colour in autumn. Its compact centre sits along the Kurobe River, where you can stroll between cafés, bathhouses, gallery and the station of the Kurobe Gorge Railway. Tonight we experience a ryokan with traditional Japanese 'kaiseki' dining. Dinner is included and overnight Unazuki Onsen.

Monday 18 October 2027 (B) – Unazuki Onsen, Kurobe Gorge Railway and to Toyama

After a morning onsen and breakfast in our ryokan, join the Kurobe Gorge Railway for an exhilarant journey into the **Tateyama Mountain Range.** We travel along the deepest V-shaped valley in the entire country. View the beauty of the valley between Unazuki Onsen and Keyakidaira on our 1 hour and 20-minute journey, covering 20.1 kilometres, including 41 tunnels and 22 bridges. There are many hot springs along the route, and at our destination in the mountains you can view the Kurobegawa River and there is the opportunity for those who wish to experience an outdoor foot hot spring experience – or even a hidden **onsen in nature**! (Note: after the heavy storms three years ago, the railway has made a journey to Nekomata (2 hrs return) with the full journey expected to re-open from 1 October 2026.) Return to Unazuki Onsen, where we collect our luggage, and then travel to Toyama. "Toyama" means "rich with mountains", and the name doesn't disappoint! The city offers stunning views of a series of 3,000 metre peaks of the Northern Japan Alps. Located on the picturesque Japan Sea, Toyama has offered **fresh seafood** for generations**,** not only to locals but also to those who live in Tokyo. You must try famous white shrimp, which is recognised as '**the jewel of Toyama Bay**' – raw or as tempura, it is a local delicacy.

On arrival in Toyama in the mid-afternoon, we check into our hotel, then visit the Toyama Glass Museum - a striking contemporary art museum housed in a geometric, wood-and-glass building designed by architect Kengo Kuma. Inside, it showcases a wide range of glass art—from intricate contemporary sculptures to rotating international exhibitions—with a permanent collection that includes dramatic, colourful works by renowned studio-glass artists, including the famed Chihuly. The museum's upper floors are atmospheric and dimly lit, allowing the illuminated glass pieces to stand out in vivid detail, while the building itself blends traditional Japanese craftsmanship with modern design, making it both an art destination and an architectural highlight. Return on one of the colourful trams back to the station and our hotel. Dinner is at leisure and overnight Toyama.

Tuesday 19 October 2027 (B) – Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route

Today we experience the exhilarating **Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route** - a unique and spectacular journey through the Northern Japanese Alps, traversed by **various means of transportation** including funicular, bus, cable cars, electric buses, a ropeway and a walk across the impressive Kurobe Dam wall. Completed in 1971, the route connects Toyama Prefecture with Nagano Prefecture. The main attraction of the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route (as well as the impressive transport infrastructure!) is the **magnificent scenery of the Tateyama Mountain Range**, part of the Chubu Sangaku National Park. With an elevation change of 2,400m through the route, we can enjoy the various scenery including the autumn colours. At Murodo (2,450m) enjoy a **short walk to Mikurigaike lake** which reflects the magnificent alps on its pristine surface. We return to Toyama, enjoy an evening meal at leisure and overnight Toyama.

Wednesday 20 October 2027 (B/L) – Kanazawa , Castle Park, Kenrokuen Garden, Samurai District and more

From the time the Maeda family lords of the Kaga domain gathered skilled craftsmen from all over Japan in the 17th century, Kanazawa became the epicentre of dozens of traditional crafts such as elegant gold leaf, silk, brilliant dyeing, pottery and more – and the tradition has continued to flourish. From the vibrant morning market we will inspect on arrival, to time honoured crafts – we visit the craftswomen making the silk balls below, there is so much to see in a day, so if specific museums appeal, let us know so we can arrange for you to visit them independently. Kanazawa is an authentic castle town, with an impressive **castle park**, in the midst of a major reconstruction of the historic castle palace. Located opposite, **Kenrokuen** is justifiably classified as one of Japan's "three most beautiful landscape gardens" – and one of the three most famed in Japan. The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art is also very popular, and we enjoy luncheon here today. Then to the Nagamachi **samurai district** which gives an insight into an historical Japanese lifestyle. We return to Toyama in the late afternoon and dinner is at leisure and overnight Toyama.

Thursday 21 October 2027 (B/D) – the Hokuriku and Tohoku shinkansen to Omiya, and Hakodate night view

A morning departure by Hokuriku shinkansen to Omiya, where we change to the Tohoku shinkansen for the journey north to Hakodate. We will have some time in Omiya to purchase some luncheon to enjoy enroute north, then local train to Hakodate. Today provides an opportunity to both experience the impressive Japanese shinkansen service, as well as enjoying the changing scenery as we head north on Honshu and cross the Seikan Strait onto the northern island of Hokkaido. Our journey to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto aboard the JR Hokkaido / East Japan shinkansen includes the **undersea crossing from Honshu - through the 53.85km Seikan Tunnel** – one of the world's longest undersea tunnels.

Hakodate is an historic port city on the southern tip of Hokkaido, known for its blend of Japanese and Western influences, scenic waterfront, and dramatic natural setting. The city's star-shaped Goryokaku fort, sloping hillside streets, and preserved Western-style buildings reflect its role as one of Japan's first international trading ports. Visitors come for its famously fresh seafood—especially the morning market—and for the breathtaking night view from Mount Hakodate, often considered one of Japan's best. Either today or tomorrow (depending on weather) we will ascend **Mt Hakodate to enjoy one of Japan's great night views**. Then we enjoy a meal in the historic warehouse district of the port, or at one of the many restaurants near the hotel. Overnight Hakodate.

Friday 22 October 2027 (B) – morning seafood market, autumn colours of Onuma Koen, then Goryakaku Fort, the Ainu people or Kotsetsuen Park

Hakodate developed as a port town for trading with foreign countries at the end of the 19th century – at the bay area near the railway station and our hotel, a **Morning Market** is held where more than 360 stalls packed tightly together attract shoppers with freshly caught squid, scallops, salmon eggs, Atka mackerel, crabs, sea urchin, and many other fish and shellfish, as well as fresh produce such as **Yubari melon**, which is super sweet and melts in the mouth. We visit the market and taste some flavours of Hokkaido. Then head the short distance north to **Onuma Koen National Park**, with nearby Ko-numa Marsh and Junsai-numa Marsh, it is 24 kms in circumference, formed by the eruption of Mt. Koma-ga-take. With 126 islands, large and small, it is famous for the spectacular views of small islands connected by 18 bridges. Explore this beautiful location, crossing small bridges between islands dotted in the lake by boat and on foot, and then enjoy luncheon at a lovely lake side restaurant. Return to Hakodate in the afternoon, and depending on autumn colour, visit Miharashi Park, which features a Japanese-style garden, "**Kosetsu-en**". With about 150 varieties of trees, the flowers and the quaint buildings provide the perfect foil for each other – the autumnal foliage is often too beautiful for words. Ginkgo, palmate maple, red maple, oliver maple and baby's breath, lend red and yellow to Kosetsuen. In season the Red Foliage Garden is elaborately adorned, and the garden is simply a riot of colours and full of poetic charm. Or visit either fort or museum. **Goryakaku Fort** - a western-style fort completed almost 150 years ago, offers a magnificent panoramic view of the entire star-shaped estate and the surrounding moat unveils itself to visitors from the observation platform of the 107-metre Goryokaku Tower, which stands adjacent to the fort. The moat is surrounded by some 1,600 cherry trees, making the Goryokaku one of Hokkaido's top cherry blossom viewing spots in springtime which turns into a blazing scene of crimson foliage in autumn. The Ainu are Hokkaido's indigenous peoples of Northern Japan – learn of the history, culture and present-day life of the indigenous peoples at the **Hakodate City Museum of Northern Peoples**. For those interested in maritime history, visit the former ship, now a museum, that crossed between Honshu and Hokkaido before the opening of the undersea tunnel. – dinner at leisure and overnight in Hakodate.

Saturday 23 October 2027 (B/D) – north to Jozankei

This morning, we purchase lunch to enjoy aboard our train journey, then head north towards Sapporo. The train clings to the coastline for much of the journey through Oshamambe, Noboribetsu and Tomakomai before arriving at Minami-Chitose, where we alight. We join our coach and head to the hot spring resort of Jozankei. Set in the forests along the edge of the Toyohira River, in autumn Jozankei transforms into a vibrant valley of reds, golds, and deep oranges as the surrounding forests reach peak foliage. The hot-spring town feels especially atmospheric, with steam rising against crisp mountain air and bridges framed by fiery maples. Overnight in our second ryokan stay in Jozankei, with dinner included.

Sunday 24 October 2027 (B) – Jozankei and to Sapporo

Jozankei – an onsen (hot spring) resort with a more than 150 years of history, has been a much-loved resort since the discover of the hot springs by monk Mizumi Jozank in 1866. After breakfast we have the option to experience a simple, low key canoeing experience on a short section of the river. Then to visit **Hoheikyo Dam** and surrounds – considered the best location for viewing autumn leaves in Jozankei. We visit the Futami Tsuribashi Bridge - the most scenic point in the gorge, for a pleasant walk to view more autumnal colour, followed by a walk through the village. In the mid-afternoon we depart Jozankei by coach for the bright lights of Sapporo. About 60 minutes down the valley, we enter the outskirts of Sapporo City – the capital of Hokkaido. Check in to our hotel and dinner is at leisure. Overnight Sapporo.

Monday 25 October 2027 (B) – to Sapporo

Sapporo is a spacious, modern city known for its wide streets, orderly grid layout, and a relaxed atmosphere that blends urban convenience with easy access to nature. Famous for its snowy winters, local beer, and distinctive food culture, the city offers lively shopping districts, large central parks, and seasonal events that give it a warm personality despite the cold winter climate. Surrounded by mountains and filled with open public spaces, some 2 million of Hokkaido's 5.5 million residents make Sapporo home. Depending on where the autumn colours are best, we will explore a combination of the **Hokkaido University's Gingko Avenue**, renowned for its stunning, thick, yellow tunnel of ginkgo trees that usually peak in late October. **Nakajima Park** features a large pond and many maple trees and is also home to the excellent Sapporo Concert Hall Kitara. Maruyama Park and Hokkaido Shrine offers beautiful autumn colours, with a more natural, forested fee, whilst **Mt. Moiwa** offers panoramic views of the city's autumn colours from the ropeway. Dinner is at leisure in one of the cities many restaurants, and in the evening, explore the Susikino District with its busy nightlife and colourful neon signage. Overnight Sapporo.

Tuesday 26 October 2027 (B/D) – Yoichi Japanese Whisky Distillery or Otaru and overnight by ship to Niigata

After a relaxed breakfast we head north to Otaru. Otaru is a coastal port city, where evidence of its important historic trade links with foreign countries, including Russia, is evident to this day. Known for its romantic canal lined with old stone warehouses, seafood markets, and nostalgic atmosphere, it is a pleasant town to explore. You may choose to explore the link between Japan and Scotland through whisky - the Nikka Whisky Yoichi Distillery is set in the coastal town of Yoichi, surrounded by mountains and sea air that shape its bold, smoky flavour profile. Founded by Masataka Taketsuru, the father of Japanese whisky, it preserves its original stone buildings, coal-fired stills, and serene courtyard, offering visitors a glimpse into traditional whisky craftsmanship. In the mid-afternoon we return to Otaru, and board our ferry for the overnight southbound sailing along the west coast of Hokkaido and Honshu on the Japan Sea to Niigata. This large car-and-passenger vessel features hotel-like cabins, public baths, lounges, and wide observation decks where you can watch the Sea of Japan coastline and open water drift by. Accommodation aboard is in twin bedded cabins, with the opportunity to enjoy an exceptional bathing experience – gazing at the grandeur of the ocean and sky, exposed to the breeze from the Sea of Japan, as you soak in the outside onsen aboard. Dinner is included and overnight the Shin Nihonkai Ferry service to Niigata.

Wednesday 27 October 2027 (B/D) – Niigata – scenic regional sightseeing by train

A mid-morning arrival in the port city of Niigata - a spacious coastal city on the Sea of Japan, known for its wide rivers, modern skyline, and a relaxed atmosphere shaped by both maritime and agricultural traditions. The Shinano River—the longest in Japan—flows through its centre, giving the city an open, airy feel, while districts like Furumachi offer a mix of historic geisha culture, shopping streets, and contemporary dining.

It's a gateway to the wider prefecture's mountains, hot springs, and rural landscapes and there is a range of scenic rail options that offer a glimpse of the surrounding forests. Tonight, dinner is included in a local restaurant. Overnight Niigata.

Thursday 28 October 2027 (B/L) – Sado Island

Today we explore Sado Island – a hidden gem and recipient of 2 stars in the Michelin Guide for beautiful scenery. Sado Island is famous for its dramatic coastline, terraced rice fields, and rich cultural heritage. Historically known for gold mining and as a place of exile, it now draws visitors to picturesque fishing villages, appealing scenery and tranquil walking trails. Noh theatre is a feature of every community. Return to Niigata for dinner at leisure and overnight.

Friday 29 October 2027 (B/L/LR) – Sakata – scenic rail journey and Maiko Teahouse

After breakfast we join the Inaho Limited Express for the journey north to Sakata, an historic port city on the Sea of Japan coast, known for its Edo-period merchant heritage and scenic waterfront. Once a hub for rice trade, the city retains a sense of its prosperous past through preserved streets, traditional warehouses, and cultural landmarks. Our highlight experience today is a visit to the Somaro Maiko Teahouse, one of the few locations outside of Kyoto where maiko, trainee geisha, perform daily. Once a high-class tea restaurant that entertained merchants for over 100 years, the Somaru Maiko Teahouse was renovated and re-opened in 2000 and has become one of Sakata's top attractions. Filled with an historical collection of Hina dolls and paintings by famous Japanese artist Takehisa Yumeji, a decadent design based on Kyoto's architecture, and wood carvings and attention to detail in each room all warrant a visit to the teahouse. Enjoy a unique experience in the second-floor theatre where maiko perform, dancing elegantly and with meticulous precision to the rhythm of the shamisen. Afterward, take photos with the enchanting and beautiful maiko performers. After our visit to the teahouse, we explore either the Honma Museum's beautiful landscape garden, with picturesque Mt. Chokai in the background, or the Ken Domon Museum of Photography, which displays some 70,000 photographs from the iconic cameraman best known for his inspiring postwar photography. In the late afternoon we return to Niigata by train, and we are hopeful of experiencing the Kairi Joyful Train – a special train designed to make the train as interesting as the countryside through which it passes. (Note this depends on the yet-to-be advised schedule and seat availability.) Dinner tonight is at leisure and overnight Niigata.

Saturday 30 October 2027 (B) – to Nagoya, Japanese art of Shibori or JR Central Rail Maglev Museum

After breakfast we join an East Japan Railway's **shinkansen to Tokyo** – where we change to the Central Japan Railway's Tokaido shinkansen through **to Nagoya** - experience again the efficiency of the daily operation of the shinkansen which carries thousands of people effortlessly across the length of the country at speeds of up to 325km/h. Arrive Nagoya around midday, leave luggage at the hotel and purchase some luncheon. Then an option to learn of the Japanese art of **shibori** - a method of dyeing cloth by binding, stitching, folding, twisting and compressing. In Japan, the earliest known example of cloth dyed with the shibori technique dates from the 8th century where indigo was the main dye used. Today in Arimatsu, shibori-tie-dyed silk fabric is still made. Arimatsu is one of the 53 stage towns of the Tokaido (one of the five major highways) which flourished during Edo period. It still retains the atmosphere with the traditional street lined with typical Japanese merchant houses. Many shops deal in the traditional specialty products of Arimatsu shibori. Alternatively visit the **Central Japan Railway's Maglev Museum** - opened in 2011 the museum seeks to educate on the advances in high-speed rail in Japan and displays several trains including historic steam locomotives, world record setting experimental shinkansen (bullet train) and the latest magnetic levitating trains (maglev). A collection of 39 heritage train cars is displayed in the museum. Many of these can be entered or viewed from underneath and are accompanied by a host of exhibits explaining the different parts of the trains and all aspects of their operation and maintenance. Another section of the museum is dedicated to maglev trains and JR Central's plans to construct a maglev high speed link between Tokyo and Osaka. It also boasts an enormous model rail layout. In the late afternoon we return to Nagoya for dinner at leisure and overnight.

Sunday 31 October 2027 (B) – the Nakasendo Walk - forest, waterfalls and traditional villages

The **Nakasendō** (Central Mountain Route), also called the Kisokaidō, was one of the five routes of the Edo period, and one of the two that connected Edo (modern-day Tokyo) to Kyoto. There were 69 stations (staging-posts) between Edo and Kyoto. Although there has been much modern development along the Nakasendō, a few stretches remain in their original form. The most well-known section lies in the Kiso Valley, between Tsumago-juku in Nagano Prefecture and Magome-juku in Gifu Prefecture. The area was first made famous by the early 20th-century writer Shimazaki Tōson, who chronicled the effects of the Meiji Restoration on the valley in his landmark novel *Before the Dawn*. We traverse this eight-kilometre section of the Nakasendō which can be walked comfortably, and both Tsumago-juku and Magome-juku have preserved and restored traditional architecture. The 8.6k walk between these historical post towns requires around three hours, with forests, restored paving and fine views of waterfalls along the way – it is also possible to walk lesser distances (mostly the downhill section) for those who wish. Dinner is at leisure, and overnight Nagoya.

Monday 1 November 2027 (B) – Nagoya Palace and to Okayama

This morning, we visit the splendid **Nagoya Castle Palace** - restored to its former glory, it is a stunning architectural site and the impressive paintings and internal rooms are amazing. Returning to Nagoya Station we collect our luggage and then board a shinkansen to head southwest with the Central and then West Japan Railways to Okayama. On arrival we leave our luggage at our hotel opposite the station, then visit **Okayama Castle**, also known as "crow castle," due to its black exterior (in contrast to the White Heron Castle in Himeji). Recently emerging from excellent restoration, the castle with its displays provide an insight into the role of castles in Japan's history. Adjacent is the beautiful **Korakuen Garden – considered another of the 'three best gardens in Japan.'** Located just beside Okayama Castle which can be seen from the garden as "borrowed scenery," it is also home to the Japan Crane Society and their birds are housed in a corner of the garden. A magnificent strolling garden, it displays all the features of a quintessential Japanese garden. Explore the castle and garden at leisure, returning to our hotel when you wish. Okayama is also home to an excellent collection of museums – the Prefectural Museum of Art; the Hayashibara Museum of Art; Yumeji Art Museum; the Orient Museum and the Okayama Prefectural Museum. We will provide advice for you to explore these at your own pace. Dinner at leisure in one of the many restaurants nearby or at our hotel, then overnight Okayama.

Tuesday 2 November 2027 (B/L) – Naoshima – the art island of the Inland Sea

After breakfast we head to the port of Uno to enjoy the short **scenic ferry crossing on the Inland Sea**, to explore **Naoshima –** famed for its **outdoor art and Benesse House**. Benesse House Museum opened in 1992 as a facility integrating a museum with a hotel, based on the concept of "coexistence of nature, art and architecture." Designed by famed **Tadao Ando**, the facility is built on high ground overlooking the Seto Inland Sea and features large apertures that serve to open the interior to the splendid natural surroundings. In addition to exhibiting painting, sculpture, photography and installations in its collection. The Museum also contains permanent site-specific installations that artists have created especially for the building, selecting locations on their own and designing the works for those spaces.

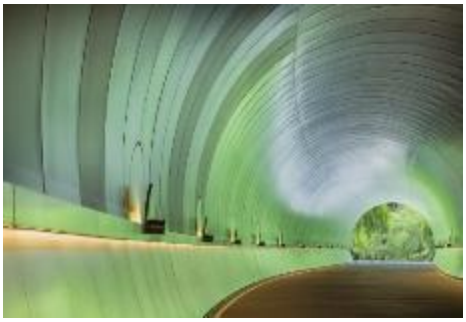
The Museum's artworks are found not just within its galleries, but in all parts of the building, as well as in scattered locations along the seashore that borders the complex and in the nearby forest. A lovely luncheon is included today in the gallery's restaurant. Enjoy a day of art and scenery, and a lovely ferry crossing on the inland sea - we return to Okayama for dinner at leisure and overnight.

Wednesday 3 November 2027 (B/D) – Grand Seto Ohashi Bridge, Shikoku, Tokushima and Awa Odori dancing

After breakfast we board a JR Shikoku Limited Express train for the island of Shikoku. **Cross the Japan Inland Sea** on one of the engineering wonders of the modern world, **the Grand Seto-ohashi bridge**. A collective term for six bridges that connect Kojima in Okayama Prefecture on Honshu and Sakaide of Kagawa Prefecture on Shikoku, spanning five islands, the bridges took 40 years and a tremendous amount of money to build. **The structure is more than 13 kilometres long, and consists of three suspension bridges, two oblique suspension bridges and one truss bridge**. We visit **Tokushima**, the capital of the prefecture of the same name. Famed for its **Awa Odori festival**, tens of thousands flock to the city in August to experience the "Fool's Dance" whose origins date back 400 years. This nickname comes from the lyrics to the common dance song, which translates as follows: **"Fools dance and fools watch, if both are fools, you might as well dance"**. Though not August, we will experience the spectacle at the **Awa Odori Kaikan Museum** - there are explanations on the history and attractiveness of Awa Odori, exhibitions of costumes and musical instruments used, a 3D theatre where you can enjoy the live dance, and the main attraction - an actual Awa Odori performance. We enjoy luncheon, and weather permitting, a boat ride along the canals of Tokushima, before returning to Okayama for an included dinner and overnight Okayama.

Thursday 4 November 2027 (B) – to Kyoto and sightseeing

This morning, we join the shinkansen for the 80 minute journey to Kyoto. We store our luggage at our hotel near the station and enjoy **sightseeing** where autumn colours are best – possibly **Fushimi Inari** with its famed sequence of red tori gates, **Tofukuji Temple**, or **Kiyomizu-dera**, one of the most famous temples in Kyoto. The latter was built at the end of the 8th century, the main hall was constructed in the 17th century and is famous for its location overhanging a cliff. The platform of the main hall, which is supported by 139 giant pillars, affords a spectacular view of the town. There is also the opportunity to walk through the picturesque lanes of Ninenzaka to the colourful Gion. We return to the hotel and enjoy a meal at leisure at one of the many nearby and excellent restaurants close to our hotel. Overnight Kyoto.



Friday 5 November 2027 (B/D) – the Miho Museum and Kyoto sightseeing

This morning, we head to what has been described as an Earthly Paradise among the Mountains. First-time visitors to the **Miho Museum** are amazed at how harmoniously it melts into the surroundings. Nestled among mountains, the path to the museum passes through a tunnel and over a hanging bridge before you arrive at the entrance. The buildings were **designed by I.M. Pei, the celebrated architect of the Glass Pyramid at the Louvre and the West Wing of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts**. Based on an image of Shangri-La, eighty percent of the building is buried underground to blend into the natural landscape. The collection contains antique and ancient pieces from a range of regions, including Japan, China, Greece, Rome and the Middle East. In the early afternoon we return to Kyoto, where there is time for you to explore at leisure, visiting specific places of interest, or to join us to where autumn colours are best. There is also the opportunity to visit the textile, handicraft and cooking/shopping supply markets in Kyoto, as well as the West Japan Railways excellent rail museum for rail aficionados. A final simple dinner together and overnight Kyoto.

Saturday 6 November 2027 (B) – Arashiyama and to Tokyo and return to Australia

After breakfast, there is the option to join us for an excursion to the **Arashiyama District** of Kyoto - Arashiyama draws visitors for its world-renowned **bamboo grove** and beautiful scenery that changes with each season. The area is dotted with temples, old imperial villas, and famous historical sites, many of which are National Treasures, or have been recognised as World Heritage sites. The Hozu River also provides a relaxing boat ride from Kameoka to Arashiyama, and wather conditions permitting, we plan to include this experience this morning. We return to Kyoto to purchase some luncheon to enjoy on the Shinkansen towards Tokyo – for a late afternoon arrival into Tokyo's Shinagawa Station, where we change to Haneda Airport for overnight flights to Australia.

Sunday 7 November 2027 – arrive Australia

Arrive Australia.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND BOOKING CONDITIONS

ACCOMMODATION, MEALS AND RAIL TRAVEL

Accommodation is generally in 4-star standard hotels. In some locations the best available may not be 4 star, and in some locations, we have selected superior hotels or ryokans as part of the experience of the location. Some nights we have included traditional ryokan accommodation with tatami mat floors and comfortable futon beds prepared on the tatami matting. Shoes need to be removed whilst in the ryokan, in rooms and at meals. Ryokan meals are generally included, and whilst we will aim to accommodate dietary requests, some meal experiences are a traditional Japanese set meal. In some locations we have selected simpler 'business hotels' where rooms are smaller and meals simpler, but their location near railway stations makes them ideal when we spend limited time in the hotel. In some hotels twin rooms are larger than double rooms, and in some cases, we may provide a larger room with two large single beds if you have selected double bed accommodation. Meals are included as shown - breakfast is included most mornings, however as a general rule we have not included lunch or dinner when there is a range of options, and you can choose the style and time of dining that you prefer. Meals included are indicated as (B) Breakfast, (L) Luncheon and (D) Dinner. Travel is generally in first class (Green Car) seats, though some services only offer standard accommodation and, on some trains, Green Car accommodation can be limited – we'll arrange the best seating possible. There is a wide range of options for eating in Japan - from very simple meals to elegant dining experiences, and from traditional Japanese food, through to the very best of international western cuisine. The choice is yours. For lunch we'll identify a number of eating options. Every town in which we stay where dinner is not included has a range of restaurants where it is relatively easy and inexpensive to eat well and enjoyably. Major department stores have food halls with freshly prepared food. Most shops and at all railway stations you can purchase a 'bento' - local take away meal boxes with a fresh range of meats, seafood, vegetables and rice. Bakeries offering tempting fresh items abound, especially at railway stations. Eating and enjoying the foods of Japan is part of the tour experience. You can eat as simply or as lavishly as you wish. Japan is exceptionally clean, fresh food a priority, and preparation and hygiene surpass Australia.

PERSONAL SERVICE AND MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

SJR prides itself on its personal service and attention to detail. The tour is escorted by the two organisers of the itinerary who have both travelled to Japan many times or lived in Japan for many years. You are assured of the utmost service and our commitment to your satisfaction. We recognise each guest has different interests, and we will provide the opportunity to allow you to rest from the group, explore by yourself, return to particular places, or visit friends or special sites you've read about – if you wish. If your interests are gardens or castles or scenery, you can tailor your activities to focus on these specific interests. Detailed advice and assistance will be given to help you, and most travel requirements can be made for you.

CAPACITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TOUR

Fitness and mobility are necessary for participation in the tour. Tour passengers must be able to manage their own luggage, and to carry/wheel it on and off trains, from stations to hotels, and if necessary, up or down a flight of stairs. Whilst most stations have escalators / elevators, the older and regional stations may not. Visiting temples and shrines involves walking up and down flights of steps, and in some cases removing shoes. The tour involves travel on the public transport networks of the many Japanese cities. By payment of your deposit and tour fare you confirm that you are of a suitable level of mobility and fitness to participate in the tour and are aware of the nature of the tour. Whilst it is often possible to use taxis to reduce the distances walked, this option is at your own expense. You may choose to not participate in an activity if you consider it too strenuous, and remain at the hotel, or explore locally.

FARES AND BOOKING PROCEDURES

The tour is limited in size to 16 guests, and bookings will be confirmed in order of receipt of a deposit of $3,000 per person. **The tour fare is $18,980 per person (twin share) plus airfares from Australia, with a $3,995 single supplement for hotels.** The tour fare includes first class rail travel in Japan (some rail services may not have first class accommodation available, or in some instances, not sufficient for the whole group, and in these cases, standard rail accommodation is provided); all bus, tram, metro and light rail transfers when part of the group; all accommodation on a twin share basis (single accommodation is available on payment of the single supplement); sightseeing and entrance fees as indicated, and meals as shown in the itinerary for each day. The fare does not include meals not identified, drinks, excess baggage charges, gratuities, telephone calls, laundry, any items of a personal nature, travel outside the organised group, or taxi usage when not part of the planned transport means. Due to the variety of interests of individuals, and the large range of temples, gardens, shrines, museums etc. available for inspection on some days, we have included key features in the tour cost. Inspection and entry fees when not part of the planned group activity are not included in the tour cost. Additional or optional activities such as some cable car journeys, boat cruises or entrance fees are not included in the cost. Bookings should be made on the attached form.

The deposit of $3,000 per person should be forwarded by cheque, payable to St James Rail, along with the booking form, to SJR, PO Box N400, GROSVENOR PLACE, 1220.

You can also pay by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT):

Account Name:	Scenic Journeys by Rail
BSB:	033 364
Account Number:	612826
Reference:	Your name and 'Japan'

If paying by EFT, please include the Reference above, and email to sjr@digitor.com.au to advise that you have done so – or if you have used a different reference. Please forward the booking form to the postal address above, or scan and email it to us. Credit card payment is possible by Visa/MasterCard. Please call us to make payment by credit card.

AIR TRAVEL TO/FROM JAPAN

A range of flight options exist, including daylight and overnight services in both directions with Qantas and All Nippon Airlines, or direct daylight travel to Japan and night travel back from Japan with Japan Air Lines. On receipt of booking we'll contact you to discuss your flight preferences and with our travel agent MTA Travel, we will identify the best airfare to meet your travel needs. Business Class seating is also available.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Call us on 0418 585 838 or email at sjr@digitor.com.au for further details or information.

BOOKING, CANCELLATION AND TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Bookings will be accepted on the attached form. **Changes to the itinerary** - as the tour operates to some remote parts of Japan, where accommodation and travel options are limited, the tour organiser reserves the right to change and amend the itinerary at his sole discretion based on necessary changes to travel plans due to air, sea and land schedule changes and hotel availability. **Currency fluctuations** – the tour organiser reserves the right to adjust the tour price based on significant foreign exchange movement between the Australian Dollar and the Japanese Yen. **Cancellation** fees apply as follows: the initial deposit is non-refundable. After payment of further deposits towards the final tour cost, costs for tickets, accommodation, sightseeing etc made on your behalf will incur cancellation charges equal to the cancellation charges incurred to us, imposed by suppliers/operators, plus a fee to cover administrative costs – more than three months prior to departure, $1000 per person; within three months, $2000 per person. No refund will be made for cancellations after 15 July 2027. All cancellation or administration charges imposed by the suppliers/operators of components of this tour must be borne by you, the passenger. **Responsibility** - St James' Rail acts only as the organiser of the tour. On acceptance of tickets and travel documents for this tour, which may be evidenced in writing by a ticket, voucher, letter, or other document, you accept that neither St James' Rail nor representatives from any other firm supplying services in conjunction with this tour programme, shall be liable in contract or in tort (actionable wrong) for any injury, loss, damage, accident, sickness, delay or additional expense to you or your possessions arising directly or indirectly by force majeure or other events which are beyond our control, or which are not preventable by reasonable diligence on our part, including, but not limited to, civil disturbance, fire, floods, acts of God, acts of Governments or other authorities, changes in itinerary, weather, strikes, war, transportation disruption, failure of machinery or equipment, industrial action, pandemic, quarantine or any other cause. Where travel is by scheduled carrier, or charter service, that carrier's responsibility is limited in accordance with their conditions of carriage. Similarly all luggage is your responsibility, and we cannot be held liable for any loss or delay however caused.

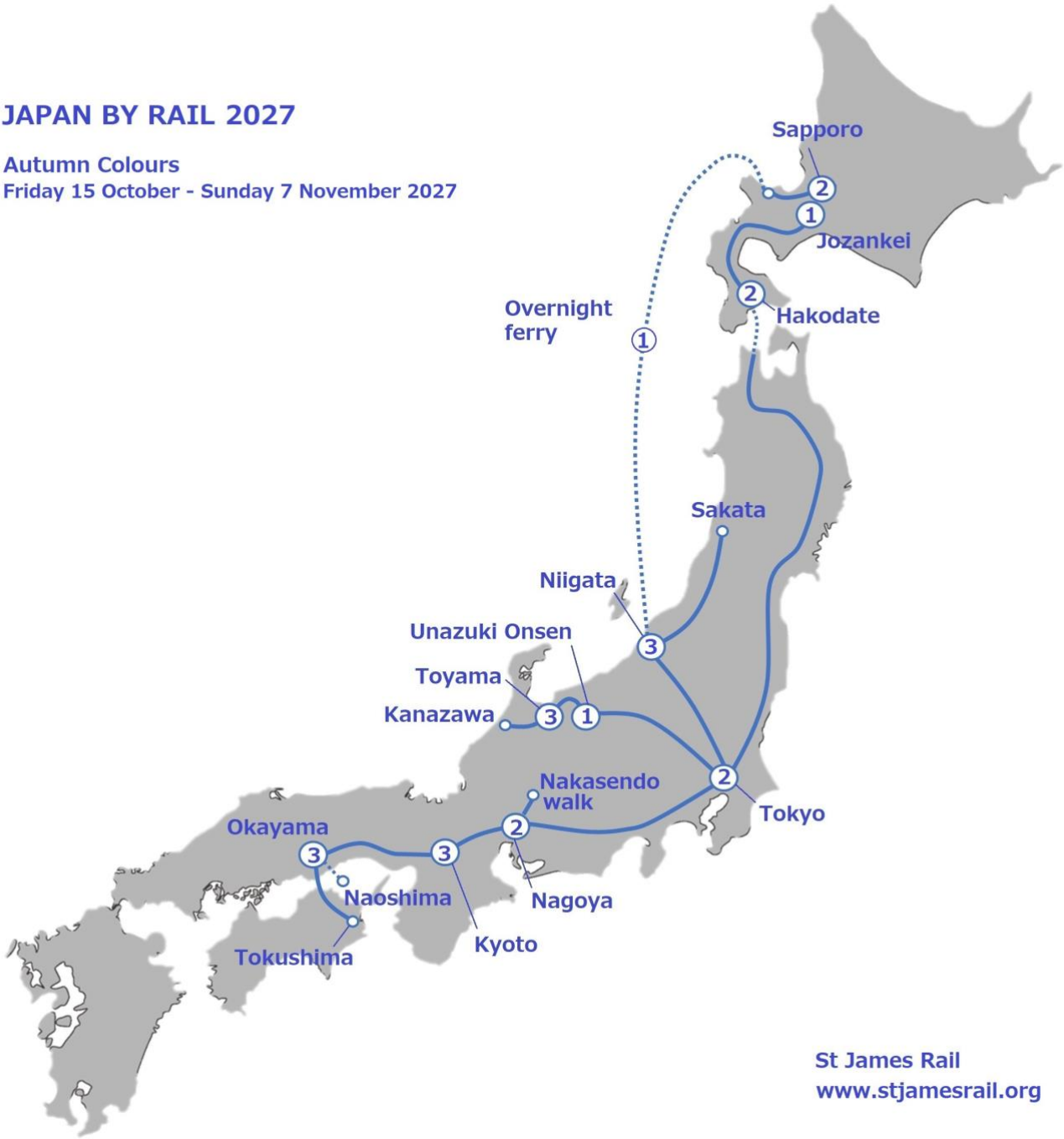
The care of your travel documents are your own responsibility. All expenses incurred by loss must be borne by you. Airline regulations and conditions are written on the airline tickets and are issued to passengers subject to their acceptance of these conditions. Changes in exchange rates, taxes and any land arrangements costs may alter the price of the tour, and St James' Rail reserves the right to change, amend or cancel this tour and/or itinerary if necessary. We reserve the right to amend the itinerary en route to account for unforeseen changes or conditions, or to improve the tour experience for the majority, as determined by the tour leader. **Passports, visas, vaccinations, health requirements** – a valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is required. Obtaining all visas, vaccinations or other health requirements to meet the expectation of airlines or foreign governments is your responsibility. St James' Rail cannot accept responsibility for any losses or expenses incurred as a result of a passenger not holding valid and necessary passport, visa, vaccination or health documents. ***Conditions relating to COVID-19 or other Government restrictions*** – if the tour is unable to proceed due to Government restrictions, SJR may at our election: postpone your travel arrangements to a future date, in which case we will issue you with a credit note equal to amounts paid at the time of postponement; or cancel your travel arrangements, in which case our contract with you will terminate. If we cancel your travel arrangements and our contract terminates, neither of us will have any claim for damages against the other. However, we will refund payments made by you less unrecoverable third-party costs and less fair compensation for work undertaken by us up until the time of termination and in connection with the processing of any refund. SJR will refund payments it is able to recover or not incur from the various suppliers of services to this tour. Refunds will be made when the funds have been received by SJR from third party suppliers. **Full details of terms and conditions**: if you would like a copy of the full terms and conditions applicable to all SJR tours please contact us and we will forward a copy to you.

INSURANCE

A condition of travel on this tour is that you have a comprehensive travel insurance policy to protect yourself against cancellation fees, health and other travel risks. An insurance policy can be sent to you from our travel agent, Sarah Manche, MTA Travel, for your consideration. Obtaining insurance cover for the tour is your responsibility. It is highly recommended that insurance is secured at the same time or shortly after deposit payments are made.

JAPAN BY RAIL 2027

Autumn Colours
Friday 15 October - Sunday 7 November 2027



St James Rail
www.stjamesrail.org

AUTUMN COLOUR
- JAPAN BY RAIL –

Friday 15 October – Sunday 7 November 2027
Booking Form

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Name: …….

Address: …….…… Suburb: …… Postcode: ……

Home tel: …… Work tel: …… Mobile: …….

Email: …….

BOOKING DETAILS (Full passenger names EXACTLY as shown in your passport:)

Passenger 1 Name: ……. …….….

Date of Birth: …….. Passport No: …… Expiry Date: …….….

Frequent Flyer: Airline ……. No: …….

Passenger 2 Name: ……. …….….

Date of Birth: …….. Passport No: …… Expiry Date: …….….

Frequent Flyer: Airline ……. No: …….

PLEASE INCLUDE / SEND A SCANNED PHOTOCOPY OF THE DATA PAGE OF YOUR PASSPORT

PAYMENT

….. I have enclosed $ …….. as deposit ($3,000 per person) for the above booking. Please make cheques payable to St James Rail and send to SJR, PO Box N400, GROSVENOR PLACE, 1220.

….. I have paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) as described previously. Please email SJR to advise and send this form.

Account Name:	Scenic Journeys by Rail
BSB:	033 364
Account Number:	612826
Reference:	Your name and 'Japan'

A letter will be sent acknowledging receipt of your deposit and providing further details.

AIR TRAVEL TO/FROM JAPAN

….. We would like you to book flights for me/us to travel to and from Japan. We will call to discuss air travel options.

….. We will make our own flight arrangements to travel to and from Japan.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

Single rooms: ……. Double rooms: ……. Twin (two bedded) rooms: …….

(Note – as mentioned above, in some hotels twin rooms are reasonably larger than double rooms, and in these cases we may provide the larger room for you unless you specifically request us not to do so.)

A single supplement is payable for sole use of rooms in hotels/ryokans.

RYOKAN – TRADITIONAL JAPANESE ACCOMMODATION

The tour includes some accommodation in quality Japanese ryokans. These involve sleeping on tatami mat floors, with futons (thin mattresses) and require you to remove shoes in the ryokan, the rooms, and sometimes at dinner and breakfast.

Please advise below if you are not able (or do not wish) to sleep on tatami mats with futons in Japanese ryokan hotels, or do not wish to remove your shoes. We will then book you a western style hotel room in the ryokan, or at a nearby western style hotel.

….. I prefer Japanese style rooms, with **futons laid on the tatami mat**, in the ryokan (Note: you can add two or three futons to make the mattress more comfortable if you wish.)

….. I prefer western style beds in the ryokan, and **am happy to remove shoes** in the ryokan when necessary

….. I prefer western style beds, and **do not wish to remove shoes** in the ryokan (we will accommodate you in a nearby hotel.)

DIETARY REQUESTS (we will do our best to accommodate and advise accordingly)

Please indicate any dietary request : ……...……

….……

….……

INSURANCE

….. Please send an insurance policy from MTA Travel.

YOUR SIGNATURE

I have read the reservation conditions outlined above and accept them on behalf of myself and my party by whom I am authorised to make this agreement.

Signature of person making reservation: …… Date: …….

Cancellation charges will apply as advised in this itinerary. An insurance policy can be forwarded from our travel agent MTA Travel.

Telephone	+612 9326 9660	Mobile	+61 418 585 838
Email	*sjr@digitor.com.au*	Web	www.stjamesrail.org

October 2026