

Japan Tour Review



Taste of Japan

Dick and Alice Bardsley

This tour was a wonderful first exposure to Japan. It was a limited (25 person) tour that was fully guided by an English speaking extremely knowledgeable guide that gave a combination of an urban and suburban and rural look at Japan. Sue booked this trip for us using General Tours. The tour was excellent from start to finish, where no detail was left to chance. We stayed at top of the line hotels and the included tour meals were all first rate and mostly typical Japanese fare. Western style meals were also available. Cannot say enough about General Tours – very impressed with their operations - we would book another tour with them without any hesitation. The trip was worth every penny.

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The tour consisted of stays in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hakone and Osaka with stops in places like Mount Fuji, Hakone Hot Springs resort, a cable car tour up a mountain adjacent to Mount Fuji and a one night stay in a typical Japanese ryokan (a traditional inn).

The tour was made up of several high light guided tours in each area to items of interest such as the emperor's residence, shrines, castles, parks and scenic areas, but free time was scheduled to allow us to explore on our own and for shopping experiences. The main mode of transportation was tour buses,

however, one segment of the trip was on the 300 to 400 mph bullet train. That was quite an experience, especially the express loading and unloading.

We found overall that Japan was an expensive place to visit. An evening meal could cost up to \$100 per person. However, the Kobe Steak dinner we had was worth every penny of the cost. We recommend taking Japanese Yen with you when you go. The exchange rate is approximately 100 Yen to the dollar. Very few facilities would accept American currency and only major hotels etc would accept credit cards. ATMs were very limited and mostly found at Japanese post offices.

Tokyo is a thoroughly modern city of 19 million people with a sky scraper skyline that would rival any city in the world. We found that the people were all extremely friendly no matter where we were. All though Kyoto had a population of over two million people the atmosphere there was more laid back and not full of the hustle and bustle of Tokyo. It also had an area of the traditional old wooden structures that were being preserved to maintain their heritage. This is where we stayed at the traditional Japanese Inn, slept and ate on the floor and attended a traditional tea ceremony. Kyoto is where we saw many Geisha girls as that was the main training area for them. Osaka is a modern city with an international airport and the famed Osaka Castle that dates back over 400 years. The castle was a nine story fortress surrounded by thick stone walls and moats and each floor had museum quality displays that were informative and very interesting.

The weather in the month of September was moderate with temperatures in the 70s and 80s, and it only rained one day, however, it had rather high humidity. The only negative is the ten hour flight too and from, but everything in between was fantastic. We are looking forward to visiting again in the future.

Sue, as always, was extremely knowledgeable and efficient in consulting with us and in arranging this tour. She leaves no detail to chance. We look forward to our continued relationship with Sue for all of our travel needs.

