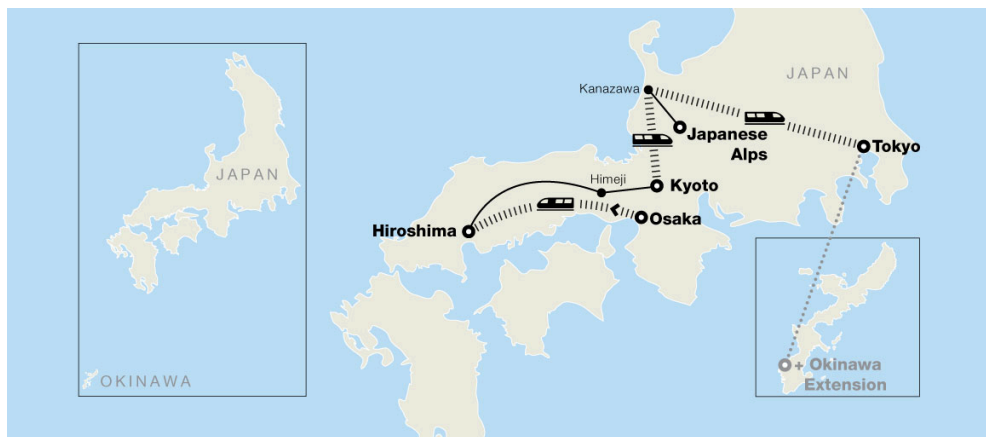




# Japan: Kyoto, the Japanese Alps & Tokyo with OLLI CSU

14 days | 18 days with Okinawa & Tokyo extension | Apr 10 2028—Apr 23 2028

Japan's reputation as a dynamic destination is well-earned. (Looking at you, Tokyo.) But if you look beyond the neon glow of its super-cities, you'll find something calmer—and the Japanese Alps are the thread that binds it all together. This tour juxtaposes the buzz of Osaka's Dotonbori district with the quiet of Kyoto's temples, the rustic charm of Takayama's Old Town, and the mountains gracefully standing sentinel at Kamikochi. You can even add a tropical twist by tacking on the extension to Okinawa!



## Your tour package includes

- 12 nights in handpicked hotels
- 12 breakfasts
- 5 dinners with beer, wine, or sake
- 3 tastings
- 1 liquor tasting
- 1 cooking class
- 12 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 3 train rides

## Included highlights

- Kuromon Ichiba Market
- Peace Memorial Park and Museum
- Hiroshima legacy successor talk
- Himeji Castle
- Golden Pavilion
- Fushimi Inari shrine
- Japanese Alps
- Kaiseki dinner
- Meiji Shrine

## Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for at least 3 hours daily across mostly flat terrain, including paved roads and gravel paths, with few hills. You may need to climb stairs when visiting temples.

For more information, contact

<https://groups.goaheadtours.com/tours/japan-2028-olli-csu> | 1-800-438-7672

# Japan: Kyoto, the Japanese Alps & Tokyo with OLLI CSU

14 days | 18 days with Okinawa & Tokyo extension

## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Osaka today.

## Osaka → 2 nights

### Day 2: Arrival in Osaka

Welcome to Japan! After touching down, transfer by bus to your hotel, where you'll have an evening to rest up.

### Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Osaka

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting, welcome dinner*

Part culinary hotspot, part cultural hub, Osaka rivals even Tokyo in history and attractions. With help from a local guide, you'll get to know this welcoming city, and savor your first taste of Japan, on today's sightseeing tour.

- Visit Osaka Castle, a massive moat-ringed fortification that has anchored the city since 1583. Explore its grounds and a museum dedicated to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the "Great Unifier" who built it.
- Stroll through Kuromon Market. Dating to the Edo period, when Japan was unified and ruled by the Tokugawa shogunate, this covered commercial space houses some 150 shops selling everything from street food to clothing. Learn about Japan's culinary traditions as you walk, then stop to try takoyaki—ball-shaped bites of batter stuffed with diced octopus.
- Continue to the colorful Dotonbori district, instantly noticeable from the glow of its many neon signs, for free time to explore and find lunch.

This evening, sit down with your fellow travelers for a welcome yakiniku dinner—a family-style meal where you grill your own bite-sized pieces of meat and veggies. Sip on your choice of beer or wine as you recap the day's adventures and look forward to the rest of your trip.

## Hiroshima → 1 night

### Day 4: Train ride to Hiroshima & sightseeing tour

*Included meals: breakfast*

Board a high-speed bullet train to Hiroshima and get to know the "City of Peace" on today's guided sightseeing tour.

- Visit Peace Memorial Park to see the Atomic Bomb Dome, which was built in 1915 as an exhibition space and, just 30 years later, was the only structure to withstand the U.S.'s infamous atomic bombing of the city during World War II.
- Meet an A-Bomb Legacy Successor, a local trained and certified to tell the stories of the hibakusha—the dwindling survivors of the atomic bombing. Listen as they recount the memories passed down to them and ask about their work preserving the city's history.
- Enter the Peace Memorial Museum, which displays belongings left behind by bombing victims, as well as photos and other materials that convey the horror of the event.
- Take a short ferry ride to Miyajima Island to view the 12th-century, UNESCO-listed Itsukushima Shrine, a Shinto shrine known for its "floating" orange torii gate.

*Please note: The order of today's activities may change, depending on when you meet with the A-Bomb Legacy Successor. Additionally, you'll have free time for lunch on Miyajima Island later in the afternoon. We suggest bringing snacks in case you get hungry.*

## Kyoto → 3 nights

### Day 5: Kyoto via Himeji

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Instead of driving straight to Kyoto, follow the shores of Osaka Bay west to seaside Himeji. After free time for lunch, join your group for a visit to the city's crown jewel—Himeji Castle. Existing in some form since 1333, it has survived the march of time and the bombs of World War II, becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

- Pass beneath the wooden Otemon Gate and snap photos of Himeji Castle's regal white walls. (The brilliant color of its facade earned it the nickname of Shirasagi-jo—White Heron Castle.)
- Enter the main keep and, if you choose, scale a set of narrow staircases to reach the sixth floor. A humble shrine will greet you, as will 360-degree views of the castle complex and Himeji beyond.
- Walk back through the Otemon Gate and pause in Koko-en, a collection of nine walled-in gardens showcasing landscaping styles from across the Edo period. Go for a peaceful stroll before returning to your bus.

With more sightseeing on the books, cruise to Kyoto and end your day with a group dinner, served with beer or wine. Your menu: shabu-shabu, an interactive hot pot-style meal where meats and veggies are boiled at your table. Dig in, then turn in for the evening.

### Day 6: Kinkaku-ji temple & Fushimi-Inari Shrine walking tour

*Included meals: breakfast*

Today, join a guide on a walking tour of Kinkaku-ji—the Temple of the Golden Pavilion. Having served as Japan's capital for more than 1,000 years, Kyoto is still considered the country's spiritual center, and this resplendent UNESCO-recognized shrine embodies that legacy.

Then, accompany your Tour Director on a walk through the Fushimi Inari Shrine, one of Japan's most sacred sites. From the base of Mount Inari, its 10,000 torii gates snake up the slopes, creating tunneled trails that lead visitors to other, smaller sanctuaries. Climb to the Yotsutsuji intersection and take in a panoramic view of Kyoto before returning to the city.

Add this afternoon's optional outing to your itinerary and we'll shepherd you from the serene stalks of the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove to the calming confines of the Okochi Sanso Garden. Prefer to go solo? For a little more bustle (and plenty of bites), spend your free afternoon at Nishiki Market, a thriving collection of shops and stalls lovingly referred to as "Kyoto's kitchen."

*Please note: Foot traffic through the Fushimi Inari Shrine flows in one direction and visitors aren't allowed to turn back. Once you enter, you must complete the walk.*

+ Arashiyama District & Yuzen Cloth Experience

For more information, contact

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### Day 7: Zen meditation class

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting*

Kick the day off by tapping into your unconscious mind during a guided Zen meditation at a local temple, followed by a tour of its grounds and a matcha tasting—paired with the obligatory wagashi, a traditional Japanese sweet. Afterward, roam Kyoto at your leisure or join us on an optional trip to Nara. Buddhist shrines, bowing deer, and blissful peace of mind can all be found there; encounter them yourself by adding today's excursion to your itinerary.

+ Nara: Traditions of Japan

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## Japanese Alps → 2 nights

### Day 8: Japanese Alps via Kanazawa

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner, liquor tasting*

Bid Kyoto farewell and board a bullet train bound for Kanazawa, a coastal city squeezed between the Sea of Japan and Mount Utatsu. Then, meet back up with your bus and drive to Kenroku-en. Known as the Garden of Six Attributes, it masterfully incorporates each of the classical Chinese characteristics of perfect landscaping—spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, waterways, and panoramas—in a single, 25-acre space.

Go for a stroll and become familiar with this Great Garden of Japan, then make one last stop in the heart of Kanazawa. Since the 1820s, patrons have flocked to the wood-paneled teahouses of the Higashi Chaya District. Stroll down its main street, cameras ready and ears perked—depending on the day, you might catch the traces of a geisha's performance lingering in the air.

This evening, you and your group will be treated to a kaiseki dinner, served with beer or wine and paired with a sake tasting. Each course of this traditional meal uses seasonal ingredients and showcases a chef's talents through elegant preparation and presentation. In other words, you're sure to delight in each bite.

### Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Takayama & the Alps

*Included meals: breakfast*

Nestled in the heights of the Japanese Alps, Takayama developed its own unique culture over the centuries—and still boasts a traditional streak that separates it from Kyoto and the other cities you've visited thus far. Follow your Tour Director through the quaint streets of Sanmachi Suji—a historic district dotted with 17th-century Edo-style homes—and sink into the pace of mountain life.

Afterward, hop onto your bus and drive into the scenic environs of Chubu-Sangaku National Park. Your destination: Kamikochi, a pristine highland valley treasured as one of the most beautiful places in all of Japan.

- Hike along Taishoike Pond, created when Mount Yake erupted and dammed the Azusa River. As you make your way to nearby Tashiro Pond, keep your head on a swivel: Magnificent mountains surround your route, adding to its undeniable allure.
- Cross the Kappabashi. Spanning the clear waters of the Azusa River, this wooden suspension bridge looks out onto the imposing Hotaka mountain range. (You'll want to have your cameras ready!)
- Spend some free time browsing the exhibits in the Kamikochi Visitor Center, then return to your bus and drive back to your hotel.

*Please note: Kamikochi is closed from mid-November to mid-April. During that time, you'll instead visit the Shirakawa-go region. Nestled in the Shogawa River Valley, this UNESCO-listed area is home to Ogimachi—a traditional farming village—and the Gassho-zukuri Minka-en Outdoor Museum, famous for its thatched-roof houses.*

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## Tokyo → 4 nights

### Day 10: Train to Tokyo & tea ceremony

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting*

Return to Kanazawa this morning and board a high-speed bullet train to Tokyo. Your first activity upon arrival: a tea ceremony. Join a tea master to learn about all aspects of this centuries-old practice—things like the importance of each utensil used, the meaning of the symbolic gestures made while sipping your brew, and the inclusion of decorative wagashi. Finally, board your bus and transfer to your hotel, where you'll have a free evening to recharge.

### Day 11: Sightseeing tour of Tokyo & cooking class

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting, dinner*

Join a local guide and embark on an immersive tour of Tokyo, Japan's bustling capital. Ancient shrines and temples, peaceful parks, and modern skyscrapers make up the tapestry of the city, which is home to nearly 14 million people.

- Walk through Tsukiji fish market, whose historic lanes and alleys are chock-full of sushi shops, ramen stalls, tea vendors, and more.

- Learn about Japan's seafood heritage and visit a vendor's stall to sample fresh sushi. (There will also be a vegetarian option available.)
- View Tokyo's iconic Shibuya Crossing—the world's largest, with as many as 3,000 pedestrians passing through the busy intersection at a time—as you drive through the center of the city.
- Set off on a short walk, from Yoyogi Park—one of Tokyo's largest, with lawns, ponds, and forested areas—to Meiji Jingu shrine, the final resting place of Japan's Emperor Meiji, under whose reign Japan became a major power in the modern world.
- Stroll through the lively Harajuku neighborhood, which is known for its colorful street art, youthful fashion trends, and cosplay culture.

For tonight's dinner, you'll team up with an experienced chef to learn how to prepare traditional Japanese cuisine. Grab your apron and watch as they whip up a bento box of makizushi (sushi rolls), chicken teriyaki, and other staples. Then, try making some yourself before sitting down to feast on your creation, served with beer or wine.

### Day 12: Free day in Tokyo

*Included meals: breakfast*

You've filled your trip with towering mountains—but to include the biggest, most famous of all in your itinerary, be sure to sign up for our optional outing to Mount Fuji. If you choose to hang back in Tokyo, try to visit some of its landmark gardens. Our favorites include the Imperial Palace East National Gardens, landscaped among ruins of the 15th-century Edo Castle; the Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, peppered with ponds and cherry trees; and the Meiji Jingu Gyoen, an iris field just steps away from a famous Shinto shrine.

+ Mount Fuji & Aokigahara Forest

### Day 13: Sightseeing tour of Tokyo

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Set out with your Tour Director to explore two prominent Tokyo neighborhoods: Ueno—a lively district teeming with museums and shops and home to a popular namesake park—and Asakusa, which is known for its Old Tokyo atmosphere.

- Learn about the history of pagodas and shrines in Ueno Park, a large public park in Tokyo's northeastern Ueno district that's known for its many museums and cherry trees.

- Walk to Ameya Yochoko (or Ameyoko for short), a busy market street, and enjoy free time to visit its shops and open-air stalls.
- Make your way by coach to the Asakusa district and peruse Kappabashi Street. With over 170 shops specializing in high-quality restaurant equipment, it's no wonder Tokyoites call it Kitchen Town.
- Enter Senso-ji, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple—and, with its five-story pagoda and red-and-white facade, one of the most photographed, too.

Enjoy one final afternoon at your leisure, then celebrate your trip with your groupmates at a farewell dinner, served with beer or wine.

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## Flight Home

### Day 14: Departure

*Included meals: breakfast*

Transfer to the airport for your flight home—or sprinkle some tropical sunshine into your alpine adventure by extending your trip to visit Naha, the capital of Okinawa.

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## + Okinawa & Tokyo extension

With white-sand beaches, a distinct cultural history, and idiosyncratic cuisine, Okinawa can feel like a world away from the Home Islands. But this tropical outpost paints a more complete—and colorful—picture of modern Japan, one you'll analyze and appreciate with help from local experts.

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## Okinawa → 3 nights

### Day 14: Flight to Naha

*Included meals: breakfast*

This morning, head to the airport for your flight to Naha. Soar over the East China Sea and touch down on Okinawa Island, where you'll transfer to your hotel. All that's left is to settle in and prepare for tomorrow's sightseeing.

### Day 15: Sightseeing tour of Naha

*Included meals: breakfast*

Since the days of the Ryukyu Kingdom, Naha has anchored the Okinawa Islands. Today, set out with a local guide to explore the highlights in and around the region's largest city.

- Breathe in a moment of respite at Shikina-en.

Built in 1799 to entertain the envoys of Chinese emperors, this stroll garden was honored as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its singular mix of Chinese and Japanese design elements.

- Head north to the Maeda Escarpment—better known as Hacksaw Ridge. In the spring of 1945, it was the site of one of the fiercest engagements in the Battle of Okinawa. Climb its heights and tour the battlefield, learning about the bloody conflict.

During your free afternoon, roam Naha and see if you can spot any shisa. Part dog, part lion, these ancient statues ward evil and have deep roots in Okinawan lore. (Pay attention to their mouths: Open-mouthed statues scare malevolent spirits away, while close-mouthed ones keep good spirits in.)

Hungry after a day full of walking? Add tonight's optional excursion to cap your day with a healthy dinner and discussion about Okinawa's Blue Zone status. Bitter melon, seaweed, and raw fish are all on the menu, so come with an open mind—you never know what'll surprise you! + Okinawa Blue Zone: Culinary Traditions & Dinner

### Day 16: Free day in Naha

*Included meals: breakfast*

To delve into another facet of Okinawan culture, add today's optional outing to your itinerary to discover the world of awamori—a rice and koji-based liquor unique to the island. If you stay behind in Naha, and are feeling peckish, track down some chanpuru. This is the quintessential Okinawan dish; for the full experience, order goya chanpuru—bitter melon, egg, tofu, and Spam all stir-fried together. + Awamori Underground Caves & Distillery Tour

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## Tokyo → 1 night

### Day 17: Flight to Tokyo

*Included meals: breakfast*

This morning, fly back to Tokyo. You'll have a free night in the city, so gather your new friends for a sake toast and cheers to your tour before turning in (or squeezing in some nighttime karaoke).

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## Flight Home

### Day 18: Departure

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

For more information, contact

<https://groups.goaheadtours.com/tours/japan-2028-olli-csu> | 1-800-438-7672

# Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.\* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: <https://groups.goaheadtours.com/tours/japan-2028-olli-csu> | 1-800-438-7672

## Day 6: Arashiyama District & Yuzen Cloth Experience

From \$119.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the morning)

Depart from Kyoto and enjoy a short transfer as you travel west to Arashiyama. This historic district boasts stunning natural beauty, and you'll take it all in on a guided sightseeing tour. Step inside the UNESCO-listed Tenryū-ji Temple, which was originally constructed in the 12th century and is considered one of Kyoto's most important sites. Meander through the striking Bamboo Grove, where soaring stalks flank a singular pathway. Finally, see the rolling, tree-covered hills that surround the Hozu River and the Togetsukyo Bridge. Spanning almost 170 feet, the beautiful wooden bridge sits against the backdrop of Arashiyama mountain. Afterwards, transfer to a local Yuzen cloth studio, where you'll discover one of Kyoto's most cherished traditional art forms. Upon arrival, enjoy an enlightening presentation about Furoshiki, the Japanese art of fabric wrapping that exemplifies Japan's commitment to sustainability. Then participate in a hands-on Yuzen dyeing experience, learning the meticulous techniques that have been perfected over centuries, as you create your own vibrantly dyed cloth to take home as a meaningful souvenir.

## Day 7: Nara: Traditions of Japan

From \$89.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5.5 hours, departs in the afternoon, lunch included)

Join a local guide in Japan's former capital, Nara. Enjoy an included lunch, then set off on a walking tour to visit some of the city's UNESCO-listed monuments. Tour the Todaiji Temple, home to the world's largest bronze Buddha statue. Continue with a visit to Kasuga-taisha. This Shinto shrine is famous for the thousands of bronze and stone lanterns that decorate the pathways on the grounds. Finally, stroll through the nearby Nara Park, home to hundreds of sacred wild deer. Later, make your way back to Kyoto. Please note: While the deer at Nara Park are friendly, they are still wild animals and should be treated with caution. If you have any allergies, please keep in mind that the deer live throughout the entire park.

## Day 12: Mount Fuji & Aokigahara Forest

From \$99.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (8 hours, departs in the morning)

Join your Tour Director and make your way to one of Japan's most breathtaking natural icons: the 12,388-foot-high Mount Fuji. En route to this UNESCO World Heritage site, stop in Aokigahara Forest, which boasts such lush foliage that it's earned the nickname the Sea of Trees. Take an hour and a half hiking tour of the Fugaku Wind Cave with a local guide. Lava flows from Mount Fuji formed the cave, and the cool temperatures in the cave helped preserve silkworm cocoons used to make the traditional textile. You'll learn about the flora and fauna as you walk along the Tokai Nature Walking Path between the two caves. Then,

head out to find the perfect views of the breathtaking Mount Fuji with panoramic vistas of the surrounding lakes and charming villages. Please note: Views of Mt. Fuji are weather-dependent.

## Extension excursion options

### Day 15: Okinawa Blue Zone: Culinary Traditions & Dinner

From \$109.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (2 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Okinawa is one of the world's five Blue Zones. These areas are home to the highest percentage of centenarians, or people living to at least 100 years old. Today, you'll learn how the island became a Blue Zone. Meet up with a local guide at a restaurant serving traditional Okinawan cuisine. As you enjoy a meal of local specialties, your guide will describe why this particular diet is key to the islanders' healthy lifestyles. The dishes will feature bitter melon, seaweed, and raw fish—so be sure to come with an appetite for adventurous eating. You'll also learn about the local attitude toward life and how having a circle of supportive friends and a strong sense of purpose help Okinawans live a long life.

### Day 16: Awamori Underground Caves & Distillery Tour

From \$149.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)

Travel to the town of Kin for a deep dive into awamori—Japan's oldest distilled alcoholic beverage—and the traditions behind it. After arriving in town, join your local guide and visit the awamori distillery to learn how this traditional Okinawan liquor is made. Then, head underground, into the awamori cellar caves, where you'll find 10,000 bottles of the liquor slowly aging to perfection. After making your way out of the caves, enjoy a taste of tofuyo, a traditional Okinawan dish made from tofu that's fermented in awamori and aged in the very same caves. (Many say it bears a striking resemblance to a fine cheese, thanks to its richness and nutty flavor.) Afterwards, sit down for an included lunch of local specialties, and take a small, souvenir bottle of awamori. Please note: Travelers must descend a very steep staircase in order to enter the Awamori aging cellar.

\*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. Go Ahead Tours accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at <https://www.goaheadtours.com/about/terms>.