experience JAPAN

06 - 21 May 2022

Japan's "Splendours of Shikoku" including Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima Spring Tour

Pricing

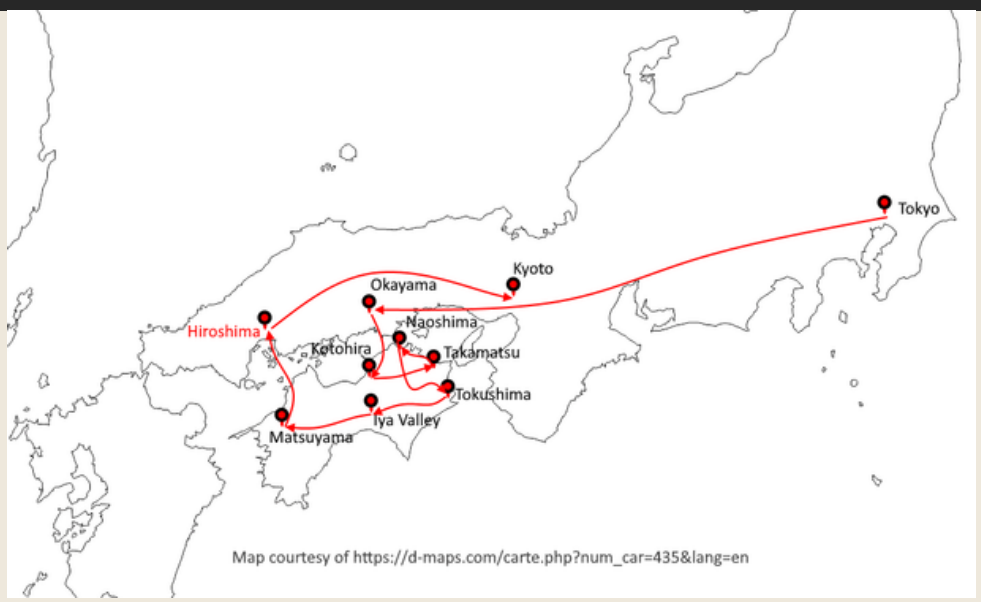
Share Twin: $8,820.00

Single : $10,350.00

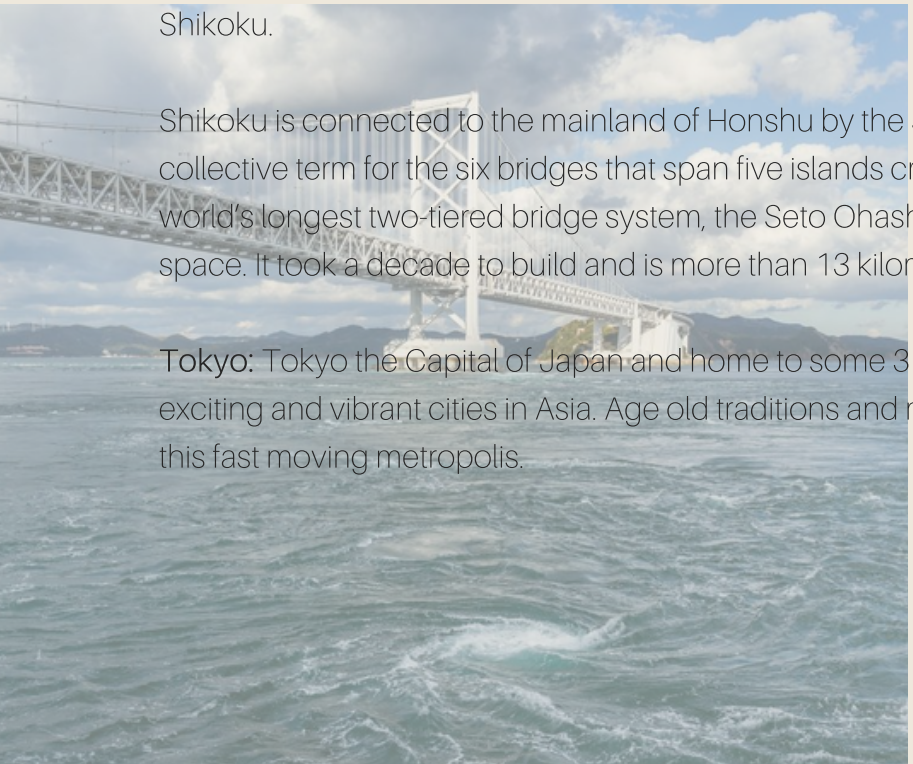
Pricing is per person, land only and subject to exchange rate (terms and conditions apply)

For more information, please contact your travel agent

Where do we go - And Why?



The word "Shikoku" means 4 countries. The Island of Shikoku is divided into 4 Prefectures and is the fourth largest island in Japan. It is also the birthplace of the most revered monk and scholar Kukai (better known by his posthumous title KOBO DAISHI) who was the founder of the Shingon Sect of Esoteric Buddhism (774-835). Kobo Daishi also developed the Japanese Kana system of syllabic writing and started the first Japanese dictionary. It is said that Kobo Daishi had either visited, stayed, meditated or has had some link with the 88 Temples of Shikoku.



Shikoku is connected to the mainland of Honshu by the Seto Ohashi Bridge which is a collective term for the six bridges that span five islands crossing the Seto Inland Sea. The world's longest two-tiered bridge system, the Seto Ohashi, is an architectural feat visible from space. It took a decade to build and is more than 13 kilometres long.

Tokyo: Tokyo the Capital of Japan and home to some 31,000,000 people is one of the most exciting and vibrant cities in Asia. Age old traditions and modern technology meld together in this fast moving metropolis.

Okayama: The Korakuen Garden is a beautiful landscape garden and is ranked as one of Japan's three best landscape gardens. Constructed in 1687 as a place of entertainment for the ruling family and a location for receiving important guests. In 1884 Korakuen became the property of Okayama Prefecture and was opened to the public.

Kurashiki: The Bikan Historical Quarter of Kurashiki is known as possibly the most picturesque merchant's quarters in Japan and dates back to the Edo Period (1603-1867). The city back then served as an important rice distribution centre. The name "Kurashiki" translates to "town of storehouses" and refers to the storehouses where the rice was kept.

Kotohira: This small town is noted for the Konpirasan which is Shikoku's most popular Shinto Shrine and is dedicated to seafaring. It also has one of the most difficult shrine approaches in Japan – 700+ steps to the Main Shrine and a total of 1368 steps to the Inner Shrine, but the view from the top is spectacular. Japan's oldest Kabuki theatre is here in Kotohira and when no performances are held it is open to visitors. Explore the trap doors and revolving stage.

Takamatsu: The beautiful Ritsurin Garden was built by the local feudal lords during the early Edo Period and it surely deserves a spot on the list of the "three most beautiful gardens of Japan". It is a landscape garden, spacious, historic trees and beautiful pavilions divided into a western style garden in the north and a Japanese style garden in the south.
Naoshima Island is known for its modern art museums and is an island located in the Seto Inland Sea. Benesse's museums were designed by Ando Tadao a well-known Japanese Architect and include the Chichu Art Museum, Lee Ufan Museum and all the buildings of the Benesse House.

Tokushima: Visit the street lined with rare udatsu house structures in Wakimachi. This street is designated as a National Important preservation district and is one of the top 100 streets in Japan. The udatsu houses are preserved homes from the late Edo Period. These homes are rare to see not only in Japan but in the world.
The udatsu are the unusual additional piece of wall made of clay and topped with a small decoration (usually a fish shaped gargoyle) which were used as a smart and elegant system to prevent fires from spreading house to house.

The Naruto Whirlpools are created by large volumes of water moving between the Seto Inland Sea and the Pacific Ocean between high/low tide combined with the unique underwater geography of the narrow strait. In ideal conditions whirlpools of up to 20 meters in diameter can be seen.

Otsuka Museum of Art is an Art Museum founded in 1998 and is the largest exhibition space in Japan. It houses over 1000 full size ceramic reproductions of major works of art including the Sistine Chapel, Scrovegni Chapel and the triclinium of the Villa of the Mysteries. The works are transferred from photographs before being fired and retouched.

Onto the Iya Valley most of which remains remote, unspoiled and traditional. 13 suspension bridges made of mountain vines (Kazurabashi) once spanned the valley but only 3 survive today.

Hiroshima & Miyajima: Miyajima Island is located less than 1 hour from Hiroshima. Here at high tide the giant torii gate seems to float on water and it is ranked as one of Japan's three most scenic sights. After the war great efforts were taken to rebuild Hiroshima. Important monuments that were destroyed such as Hiroshima Castle and Shukkeien Gardens were rebuilt/reconstructed. The Peace Memorial Park reflects the aspirations of the city re-born.

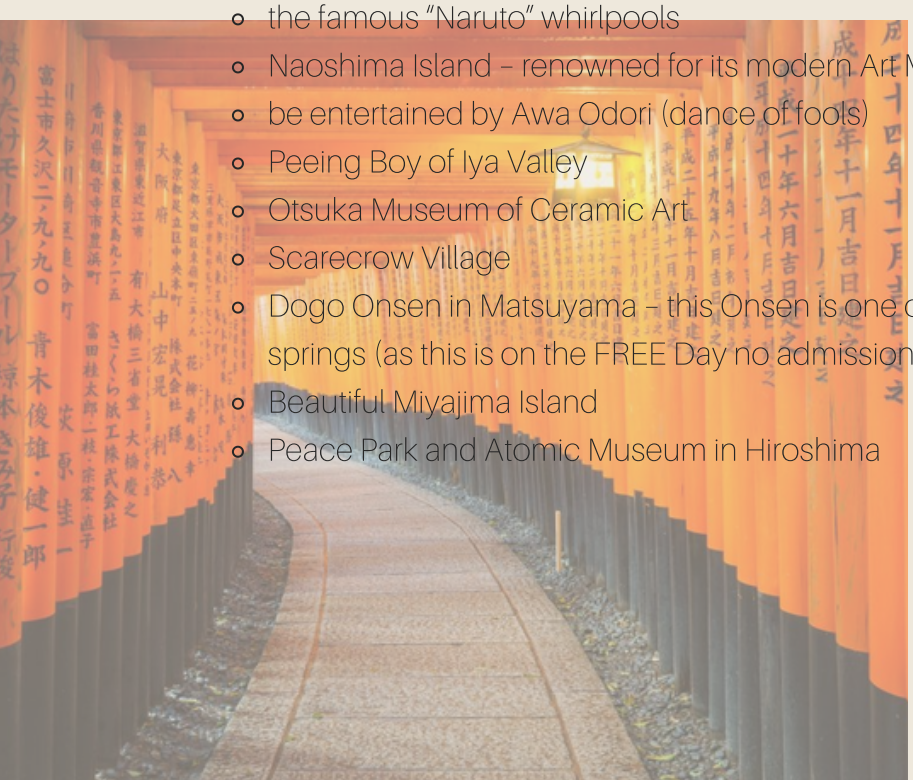
Cultural activities will include Udon Noodle making, Indigo Dyeing experience, Washi paper making and observe the making of a bamboo doll.

Kyoto: In 794 Kyoto or as originally known as Heian-kyo "Tranquility and Peace Capital" became the seat of Japan's Imperial Court and remained the capital of Japan until 1868 when at the time of the Imperial Restoration the Government was transferred to Edo now known as Tokyo. Whether you are looking for history, art, craft, culture, gardens, Temples, Shrines, excellent restaurants and beautiful walks Kyoto has it all and more on offer.

From Tokyo to Kyoto, the Capital of Japan for over 1000 years an elegant and cultural delight, and encompassing the splendours of Shikoku, this Tour opens a new and exciting door into Japan each and every day.

Inclusions

- 15 night's accommodation including four nights Japanese accommodation:
  - Kotohira : ALL Japanese rooms have private facilities : Communal BUT segregated bathrooms
  - Iya Valley : Hotel Kazurabashi : Japanese twin rooms have private bath and toilet : Japanese room for single use only has toilet
  - Dogo Onsen : Tsubaki Kan : Twin rooms are western with tatami floors and single rooms are western. All rooms have private bath and toilet
- 13 breakfasts : 5 lunches : 3 dinners
- All transportation as per itinerary including Reserved seating on the Shinkansen (bullet train) Tokyo/Okayama – Hiroshima/Kyoto
- Shared private shuttle transfer from arrival at Narita Airport or Haneda Airport to Tokyo Hotel
- 3 Luggage transfers : Tokyo to Takamatsu and Takamatsu to Matsuyama, Matsuyama to Kyoto (1 piece of luggage per person)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees as per itinerary including:
  - Korakuen Gardens – One of Japan's three most famous
  - Kurashiki otherwise known as "Town of Storehouses" and dates back to the Edo era (1603-1867)
  - the famous "Naruto" whirlpools
  - Naoshima Island – renowned for its modern Art Museums
  - be entertained by Awa Odori (dance of fools)
  - Peeing Boy of Iya Valley
  - Otsuka Museum of Ceramic Art
  - Scarecrow Village
  - Dogo Onsen in Matsuyama – this Onsen is one of Japan's oldest and most famous hot springs (as this is on the FREE Day no admission fees included)
  - Beautiful Miyajima Island
  - Peace Park and Atomic Museum in Hiroshima



- Private coach upon arrival into Okayama on 9th May until arrival into Matsuyama on 14th May 2022. Japanese/English speaking guide from arrival into Okayama on 9th May until noon on 17th May 2022
- Ferry from Matsuyama to Hiroshima. Ferry from Hiroshima to Miyajima and return to Hiroshima
- Morning tour of Hiroshima Dome and Museum
- Cultural activities e.g.
    - indigo dyeing,
    - Udon noodle making,
    - Washi paper making
- Fully escorted within Japan by an "Experience Japan" Australian Escort
- Airport transfer for flight departure from Kyoto to either Itami or Kansai Airports

NOT INCLUDED

- Return airfares
- Airport/Airline taxes
- Transportation, meals, drinks and/or entrance fees on Free Days

Itinerary

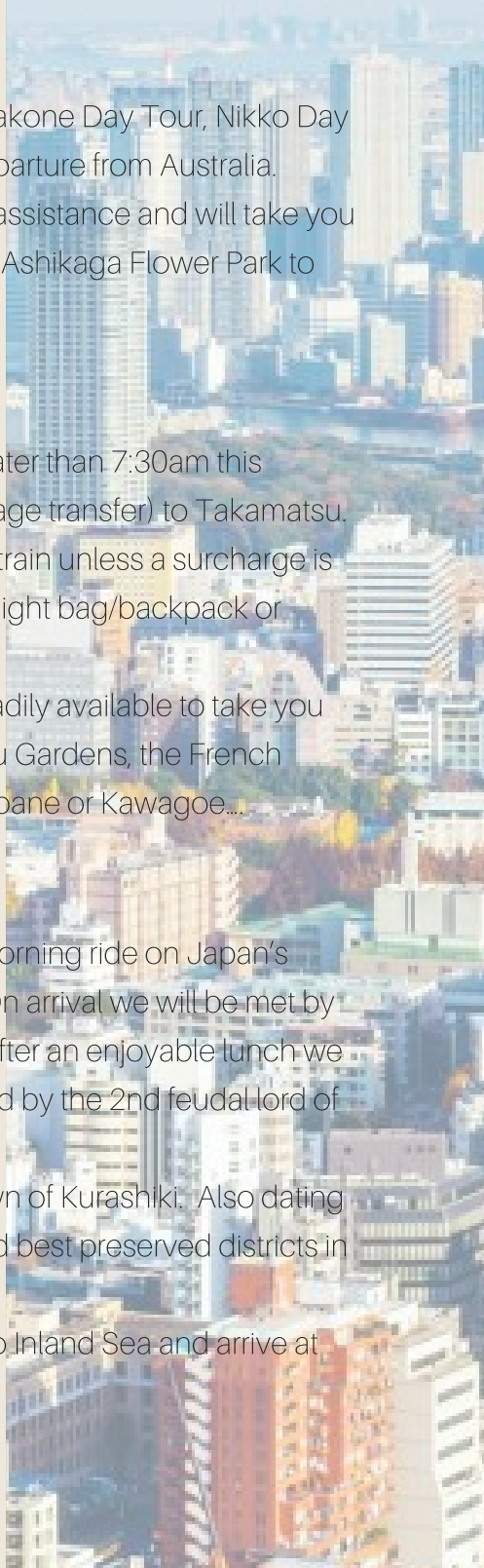
Friday 6th May :
Arrival into Narita Airport or Haneda Airport and transfer by shared private shuttle to our Tokyo Hotel for our three (3) night stay.

Accommodation: Shiba Park Hotel Tokyo : In 6th May Out 9th May

Saturday 7th May : At Leisure :
There are optional tours available e.g. Dynamic Tokyo Tour, Mt.Fuji-Hakone Day Tour, Nikko Day Tour etc which are highly recommended to pre-book prior to your departure from Australia. Alternatively your Tour Escort is readily available for suggestions and assistance and will take you sightseeing by subway and local public transport. Maybe a visit to the Ashikaga Flower Park to view the stunning wisteria? (B)

Sunday 8th May : At Leisure :
This morning please have your large suitcases in the Hotel Foyer no later than 7:30am this morning as they are to be transferred overnight by "Takkyubin" (Luggage transfer) to Takamatsu. Please note: Large luggage is not permitted on the shinkansen/bullet train unless a surcharge is paid. To travel through to Takamatsu tomorrow, please have an overnight bag/backpack or similar for ease and comfort of travel.
If you do not wish to join an optional tour today, your Tour Escort is readily available to take you sightseeing in and around Tokyo. Maybe visit the beautiful Hama-rikyu Gardens, the French Quarter of Kagurazaka and if time permits either to the old area of Akabane or Kawagoe...

Monday 9th May : Tokyo to Takamatsu via Okayama :
This morning we will transfer by mini-bus to JR Tokyo Station and a morning ride on Japan's famed shinkansen will have us arriving into Okayama around noon. On arrival we will be met by our Japanese/English speaking guide and board our private coach. After an enjoyable lunch we will visit Korakuen, one of Japan's 3 most famous gardens. Established by the 2nd feudal lord of Okayama, it has changed little since its construction 300 years ago.
Our next stop will be the historical District of Bikan in the merchant town of Kurashiki. Also dating back some 300 years it is considered one of the most picturesque and best preserved districts in all of Japan.
From here we will drive over the Seto Ohashi Bridge, crossing the Seto Inland Sea and arrive at our Hotel in Takamatsu for our two (2) night stay. (L)



Accommodation: Righa Zest Hotel Takamatsu: In 9th May Out 11th May

Tuesday 10th May : Takamatsu/Naoshima Island/Takamatsu :

This morning we have an early departure on the ferry to the Art Island of Naoshima arriving at Miyanoura Port. Here we will see the Famed Red Pumpkin by noted Artist Yayoi Kusama. We will also see her famous Yellow Pumpkin on our way to Benesse House Museum. After lunch we will visit the House Projects (walking from one project to another). Our return to Takamatsu is by private marine taxi and walk to our Hotel. (B/L)

Wednesday 11th May : Takamatsu – Kotohira :

This morning please have your large suitcase in the Hotel no later than 7:15am and it will be transferred to our accommodation in Matsuyama. Please travel with a small overnight bag or backpack for the following three (3) nights.

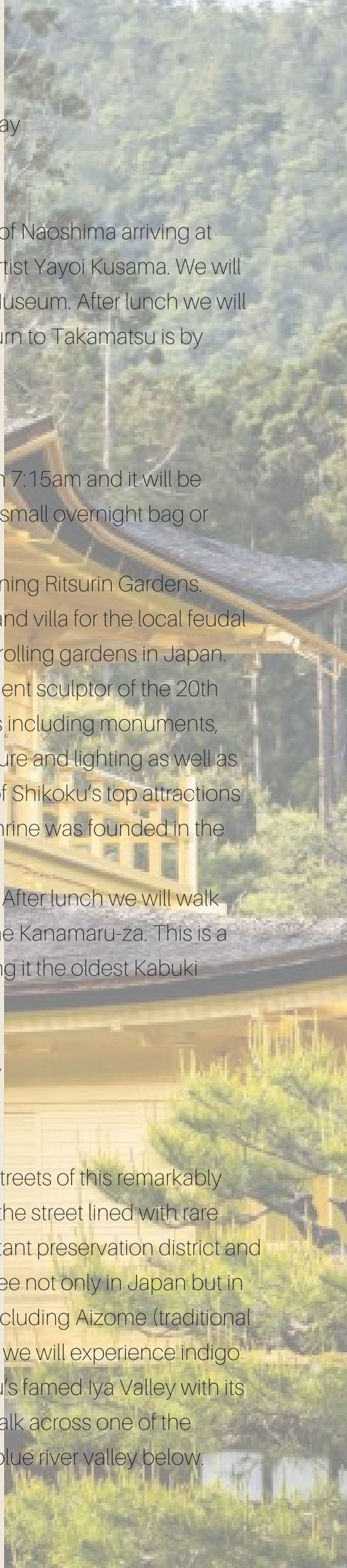
After breakfast we will depart our Hotel and visit the beautiful and stunning Ritsurin Gardens. These gardens were completed in 1745 as a private strolling garden and villa for the local feudal lords and opened to the public in 1875. Ritsurin is one of the largest strolling gardens in Japan. The Isamu Noguchi Museum is dedicated to Isamu Noguchi a prominent sculptor of the 20th Century. He was internationally renowned for his wide variety of works including monuments, environmental designs for park, gardens, interior design such as furniture and lighting as well as for stage art. The small town of Kotohira is home to Konpira-san, one of Shikoku's top attractions and one of the main shrines on the 88 temple pilgrimage route. The shrine was founded in the 14th century (Muromachi Period) and lies at the top of 1,368 steps.

We will make our own noodles for lunch at the Kotohira Udon School. After lunch we will walk around Kotohira and visit the Konpira Grand Theatre, also known as the Kanamaru-za. This is a restored Kabuki Theatre and was originally constructed in 1835 making it the oldest Kabuki Theatre in Japan. (B/L/D)

Accommodation: Kotosankaku in Kotohira : In 11th May Out 12th May

Thursday 12th May : Kotohirato - Iya Valley :

Drive through to Wakimachi where you can walk along the historical streets of this remarkably well preserved town dating back to the Edo period (1600-1868). Visit the street lined with rare udatsu house structures. This street is designated as a National Important preservation district and is one of the top 100 streets in Japan. The udatsu houses are rare to see not only in Japan but in the world. Wakimachi is home to numerous traditional artisan crafts including Aizome (traditional Japanese indigo dye). To further our knowledge of the indigo culture we will experience indigo dyeing at the Mima Tourist Bureau. From here we will travel to Shikoku's famed Iya Valley with its cliff hugging winding roads and breathtaking views. Enjoy a thrilling walk across one of the regions preserved Kazurabashi (vine bridges) which span the crystal blue river valley below.



A further drive deeper into the valley will take us past the area's famed 'peeing boy' statue and some of the regions remarkably well preserved thatch roofed farmhouses. (B/L/D)

Accommodation: Hotel Kazurabashi Iya Valley : In 12th May Out 13th May

Friday 13th May : Iya Valley – Tokushima :

This morning we will visit the "Scarecrow master of Shikoku". Ayano Tsukimi has been making Scarecrow dolls for many many years.
On to view the Naruto Whirlpools. Uzu no Michi is an enclosed walkway that extends under the Onaruto Bridge and overlooks the whirlpools. The walkway's observation room sits 45 metres above the whirlpools below which can be seen through the glass windows set in the floor. The Naruto Whirlpools occur when the opposing currents of the Pacific Ocean and Seto Inland Sea collide at high and low tides.
Lunch and onto the Otsuka Museum. This is possibly the most renowned Art Museum in Japan and built by Masahita Otsuka of Pocari Sweat fame. It has the largest exhibition space in Japan and over 1000 paintings are reproduced on ceramic boards. Some of these paintings include the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Monet's Water Lillies, Van Gogh's Sunflowers and many more.
Later this afternoon we will move to the Awa-Odori Kaikan Hall where we will watch a demonstration of the Awa Odori (dance of fools). The Awa Odori festival, held annually in August is one of Japan's most famous and beloved summer festivals. Leisure time in the afternoon. (B/L)

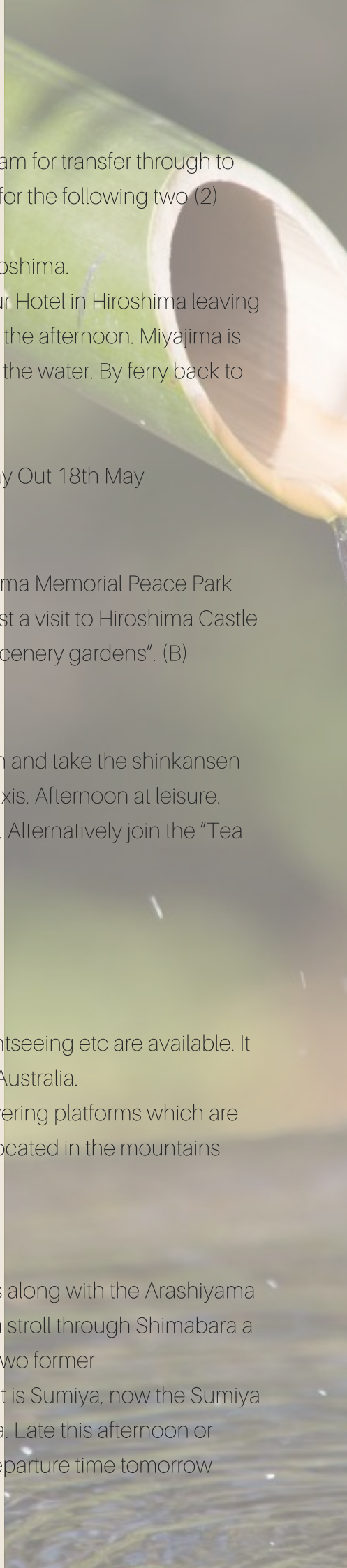
Accommodation: JR Clement Hotel : Tokushima : In 13th May Out 14th May

Saturday 14th May : Tokushima to Matsuyama :

This morning we will drive to Awagami Factory and have a Washi making experience. We will then join an "Ohenro Experience" (short walking pilgrimage) and understand how to visit temples, proper etiquette and sutra readings.
On our arrival into Matsuyama we will visit Matsuyama Castle which is one of Japan's twelve "original castles" i.e. castles which have survived the post-feudal intact since 1868. It is also one of the most complex and interesting castles in the country. Located on Mount Katsuyama, a steep hill in the city centre, it provides visitors with a bird's eye view of Matsuyama and the Seto Inland Sea (B/D)
Accommodation: Ryokan Tsubaki Kan : In 14th May Out 16th May.

Sunday 15th May : Matsuyama : At Leisure :

Free time to re-visit Matsuyama Castle and browse the wonderful streets surrounding Dogo Onsen, Japan's oldest and most revered. Both your Japanese/English speaking Guide and your Australian Escort will be available to escort and assist you today. (B)



Monday 16th May : Matsuyama to Hiroshima and Miyajima :

This morning please have your suitcase in the foyer no later than 7:15am for transfer through to our Hotel in Kyoto. Please travel with a small overnight bag/backpack for the following two (2) nights.

We will transfer to the ferry and travel across the Seto Inland sea to Hiroshima.

On arrival at Hiroshima your small luggage will be sent by courier to our Hotel in Hiroshima leaving you hands free to visit Miyajima Island. Depart for Miyajima by ferry for the afternoon. Miyajima is most famous for its giant torii gate which at high tide seems to float on the water. By ferry back to Hiroshima and taxi to our Hotel. (B)

Accommodation : Daiwa Roynet Hotel Hiroshima Eki-Mae : In 16th May Out 18th May

Tuesday 17th May : Hiroshima :

After breakfast this morning we will take maxi taxis and visit the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park and the Peace Memorial Museum. Free afternoon and may we suggest a visit to Hiroshima Castle and the Shukkeien Gardens. These are best described as “shrunken scenery gardens”. (B)

Wednesday 18th May : Hiroshima to Kyoto :

Breakfast this morning and then make our way to JR Hiroshima Station and take the shinkansen to Kyoto. On arrival at around midday we will transfer to our Hotel by taxis. Afternoon at leisure. Your Tour Escort can assist with sightseeing and/or shopping options. Alternatively join the “Tea with Maiko” afternoon tour. (B)

Accommodation: Karasuma Kyoto Hotel : In 18th May Out 21st May

Thursday 19th May : Kyoto : At Leisure :

Day tours such as Kyoto Full Day Tour, Nara Half Day Tour, Osaka sightseeing etc are available. It is recommended to prebook these tours prior to your departure from Australia.

For those interested maybe lunch at Kibune sitting on tatami mats covering platforms which are laid above the rocks stretching out over the Kibune River. Kibune is Llocated in the mountains outside Kyoto. (B)

Friday 20th May : Kyoto : At Leisure :

A suggested day outing is to visit Arashiyama and the bamboo groves along with the Arashiyama Monkey Park. On our way back to Kyoto let us walk back in time with a stroll through Shimabara a former licensed courtesan and later geisha area of the city of Kyoto. Two former teahouses/restaurants/bordellos remain from the Edo Period. The best is Sumiya, now the Sumiya Motenashi Art Museum and a must-see on a visit to Kyoto's Shimabara. Late this afternoon or early evening you will receive information pertaining to your shuttle departure time tomorrow morning to connect with your flight back to Australia. (B)