

## ROSS GARDEN TOURS

# JAPAN AT CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME

1 - 15 APRIL 2020

### ITINERARY

*Follow the ephemeral trail of the cherry blossom as it blooms across Kyoto, Kanazawa, Nikko and Tokyo on a 14 day tour that takes you inside Japan's great gardens. Experience a fascinating mix of ancient Zen serenity and modernity that makes Japan such an exciting cultural destination.*

#### DAY 1 Wed 1 April

##### Sydney – Tokyo

Meet your Ross Tour Leader at Sydney International Airport for a Qantas evening flight to Tokyo.

#### DAY 2

##### Thurs 2 April

##### Tokyo – Kyoto

On arrival at Tokyo, board the bullet train bound for Kyoto, the beautiful former imperial capital of Japan. Check in to our hotel in the centre of Kyoto for 4 nights. Our first garden visit on tour is Heian Shrine, with its unique pairing of Chinese and Japanese architectural styles. The entrance to this Meiji-era strolling garden is through an avenue of 300 weeping flowering cherries. It's a popular venue for wedding parties, and we can expect to see brides in exquisite bridal kimono posing for photographs. Welcome lunch included today.

**Accommodation: Hotel Okura, Kyoto**

#### DAY 3 Fri 3 April

##### Kyoto

Legend has it that Ginkakuji – the Silver Pavilion – was to be covered in silver leaf, but the shogun died before that could happen. An alternative theory for the name holds that the glistening black tiles on the pavilion roof reflected the light of the full moon in such a way as to look like silver. We'll come to our own conclusion as we admire the elegance of the pavilion and the wonderful Zen gardens with their raked and moulded gravel. This serene garden also features ancient pines, ginkgoes, maples and camellias.

Our next stop is Hakusa Sonso, a garden, villa and museum created by the famous Japanese painter Kansetsu Hashimoto in 1915. We'll watch a tea ceremony performed by Mrs Hashimoto, a Tea Master. The garden is a showcase of Japanese plants and Chinese statuary and we'll have plenty of time to admire it. Lunch is included in the family's restaurant.

Stroll the length of the famous Philosopher's Walk beneath a canopy

of cherry blossom and fragrant spring flowering shrubs. With the rushing snow-fed waters of the Shirakawa River below us, it's a spiritual experience. Three rows of cherries line this most-admired walk, which stretches from the local temple to the entrance of the Silver Pavilion, Ginkaku-ji. Dinner included tonight.

**Accommodation: Hotel Okura, Kyoto**

#### DAY 4 Sat 4 April

##### Kyoto

We'll experience iconic Japanese garden design today. First, an early start to catch the wonderful morning light glowing on the 18-carat gold leaf-covered roof of the Golden Pavilion, Kinkaku-ji. Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu built this three-tiered pavilion in 1397. He used it for entertaining, and as a space for quiet contemplation of nature. It's perfect proportions are reflected in the broad Mirror Lake before it.

Ryoanji Temple is our next stop, renowned throughout the world as Japan's finest example of a rock and sand garden (seki-taki). We'll take time here to reflect on the meaning of the raked patterns and enigmatic placement of rocks. While this stone garden is the most famous part of the temple grounds, the garden itself is large and planted with Japanese cedars and hundreds of exquisite flowering cherries. It's also home to a stone water-basin, Tsukubai, engraved with a famous Zen script.

**Accommodation: Hotel Okura, Kyoto**

#### DAY 5 Sun 5 April

##### Kyoto

It's an early start at Kyoto's eastern Higashiyama Mountains to wonder at the towering, World Heritage listed, Kiyomizu Temple.

Our next stop is Nijo Castle, famous for its fortress-like interior and the ingenious escape routes built into the design by the Tokugawa shogunate in the early 17th century. The garden here,

Ninomaru Garden, is planted with ancient pine trees and 430 'Sakura' cherry trees.

We've arranged a very special dinner tonight with an elegant geisha/meiko traditional dance performance.

**Accommodation: Hotel Okura, Kyoto**

#### DAY 6 Mon 6 April

##### Kyoto – Nagoya

Travel by bullet train to Nagoya to visit the iconic Nagoya Castle. Hommaru Palace reopened in 2018 after 10 years of restoration, showcasing Japan's finest example of Shoin-zukuri Samurai style residential architecture. This afternoon visit Nabana No Sato in Mie prefecture. This theme park is a new concept in world-class show gardens covering many hectares with beds filled with thousands of every type of spring flower possible and huge glasshouses overflowing with tuberous begonias and more hanging baskets than you could count. After dark enjoy one of Japan's largest illumination shows. Dinner included tonight.

**Accommodation: Nagoya Marriott Associa Hotel, Nagoya**

#### DAY 7 Tues 7 April

##### Nagoya – Kanazawa

Express train north this morning, through Japan's picturesque countryside to Kanazawa on the Sea of Japan. Kanazawa is a lovely change of pace where traditional crafts, such as ceramic, embroidery and gold leaf work are still practiced. Visit Nomura Samurai house with a garden of meandering streams, waterfalls, lanterns and plants.

**Accommodation: Hotel Nikko, Kanazawa**

#### DAY 8 Wed 8 April

##### Kanazawa

Kenroku-en Garden combines the six essential features of true gardens: vastness, symmetry, solemnity, coolness, antiquity and pleasure. This is one of Japan's three most famous landscapes and it developed from the

1620's by the local daimyo Lord Maeda and includes Japan's oldest fountain operating by natural water pressure. Included is a visit to Seisonkaku Villa, built by a samurai for his mother. The remainder of the day is free.

**Accommodation: Hotel Nikko, Kanazawa**

**DAY 9                      Thurs 9 April**

**Kanazawa – Awazu**

Travel deep into the Japan Alps to visit Shirakawago Village, nestled in a setting that looks unchanged for centuries, was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. The traditional farmhouses have steep thatched roofs, called Gasho Zukuri, a style used more than 250 years ago.

Overnight accommodation in a Japanese ryokan, and enjoy a traditional Japanese style kaiseki dinner. Make sure you take time to enjoy the very special hot Japanese baths at the ryokan.

**Accommodation: Tsujinoya Hananoshō, Awazu**

**DAY 10                      Fri 10 April**

**Awazu – Nikko**

Travel by train from Kanazawa to Takasaki and make our way to Nikko National Park and its famous monuments and mountains. We'll travel up the northern coastline, then cross the spine of Honshu through forests of Japanese Cryptomeria cedar and Chamaecyparis cypress dotted with maples. On arrival at Nikko, we visit the former Imperial Summer Palace – the Tamozawa Imperial Villa for a walk around its beautiful garden.

Our hotel in Nikko for the next two nights is the charming, 146-year-old Nikko Kanaya Hotel. This is the oldest Western-style hotel in Japan and many diplomats and intellectuals used it in its 19th and early 20th-century heyday to escape the summer heat of Tokyo.

Fittingly, dinner tonight in the hotel is western-style, complete with silver service.

**Accommodation: Kanaya Hotel, Nikko**

**DAY 11                      Sat 11 April**

**Nikko**

We visit the impressive red shinkyo Sacred Bridge then take a walking tour of the nearby Toshogu Shrine, and hear the history behind this sacred region and its traditions. The shrine was built in 1542 to honour the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. Rinnoji Temple, on the avenue leading to the shrine, contains three gigantic gilded wooden images of Buddha. The buildings are inspiring, but it is the natural beauty of the place that drew the rich and powerful all those centuries ago, and it still casts a spell. There are giant cryptomerias over 1000 years old, the turbulent waters of the Daiya River, and mists wrapping the mountain. The entire site is World Heritage listed. Afterwards, visit the Kanaya Samurai House.

This afternoon there is plenty of time to explore the charming town of Nikko, shopping for vintage kekeshi dolls and soak up the tranquil atmosphere. Dinner included tonight.

**Accommodation: Kanaya Hotel, Nikko**

**DAY 12                      Sun 12 April**

**Nikko – Tokyo**

Today our coach takes us to Tokyo, with a stop to see the sacred way of ancient cedar trees, and to visit the Omiya Bonsai Village and Museum. The village was established in 1925 when an earthquake in central Tokyo forced bonsai nurseries to look for an alternative location. They chose Omiya for its clean water and good soil. There are several nurseries in the village that specialise in bonsai and private gardens also have good collections

by their front doors. The museum itself offers a great introduction to this ancient art.

This afternoon we'll check in to the luxurious New Otani Hotel, our accommodation for the next two nights. The hotel is set in 10 acres of beautiful gardens dating back to the 16th century.

**Accommodation: New Otani Hotel, Tokyo**

**DAY 13                      Mon 13 April**

**Tokyo**

We'll visit Nezu Shrine, one of the famous Meiji Ten Shrines of Tokyo this morning, but our first destination is Rikugien Garden. This strolling garden was laid out in 1695 and restored in the 18th century. A path takes us around a lake, which features 88 stops, each offering a view that is a symbolic representation of scenes from classical Japanese literature. The rhythm achieved by alternating dark and bright zones, spacious and confined areas, sunlit groves and mysterious forests, produces virtually a musical effect. The azaleas and cherries will be putting on the last of their spring show. The serenity of Meiji Shrine will finish the day surrounded by forest in the middle of Tokyo.

Farewell dinner tonight is held at the New Otani Hotel.

**Accommodation: New Otani Hotel, Tokyo**

**DAY 14                      Tues 14 April**

**Tokyo – Home**

Late check out included today, so our day is free to explore some more of Tokyo. Stroll through the famous Ginza district, visit Hibiya Park, or catch up with some last-minute shopping. We'll take an early evening transfer to Haneda Airport for our overnight flight home.

**DAY 15                      Wed 15 April**

**Arrive Home**

## DETAILS

- Tour escorted by Carolyn Dwyer
- Return group airfare Sydney-Tokyo-Sydney
- Luxury air-conditioned motorcoach throughout tour
- Stay at the Hotel Ocura, Kyoto, Marriott Associa Hotel, Nagoya, Hotel Nikko, Kanazawa, Tsujinoya Hananoshō, Awazu, Kanaya Hotel, Nikko, New Otani Hotel, Tokyo
- Breakfast daily
- 3 Lunches
- 7 Dinner
- Entrance fees to all gardens and sightseeing including Ginkakuji, Hakusa Sonso, Junsei, Ryoanji, Ginkakuji, Nabana no Sato, Kenrokuen, Rinnoji Temple, Omiya Bonsai Museum, Rikugien Garden, Nezu Shrine

## PRICE

- Twin Share land only      \$11,995 pp
- Twin Share including air   \$13,295 pp
- Single Supplement        \$2,995

All prices in Australian dollars. Prices based on minimum 15 passengers. Air price is based on departure from Sydney.

## DISCOUNTS

- Earlybird \$300 - Pay by 1/11/19
- Previous Traveller \$100
- Garden Clinic Member \$50

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 1300 233 200

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