

2023

JAPAN BY RAIL

A CHERRY BLOSSOM SPECTACULAR

With Scott McGregor and Friends

12 - 27 APRIL 2023

TOKYO • HIROSHIMA • KYOTO • HAKONE • NIIGATA • AOMORI • SENDAI •

INTRODUCTION

MEET YOUR TOUR LEADERS

Travelling by train in the rail-loving country of Japan is, without doubt, the best way to explore this fascinating country, and in Springtime, when the landscape is alive with blossoms, it is an absolute joy. Beginning in the modern, neon-lit capital of Tokyo, the famous bullet train takes us south to Hiroshima and Kyoto - richly endowed with exquisite gardens, extraordinary temples, and enthralling cultural treasures. The mountains around Mt Fuji are captivating as are the island-hopping boat journeys and special steam train trips through verdant mountains, valleys, and forests. This immersive journey is designed to showcase the huge variety Japan has to offer. It also combines legendary food, fine hotels, stunning scenery, and unusual events all with a backdrop of springtime beauty. This is a rare chance to experience the very best of Japan as we coast around the country in all trains great and small.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Extensive rail travel using your JR Green Class (first class) Rail Pass, including numerous journeys on the iconic bullet trains, resort trains, local expresses, and metros
- Travel by steam train on the famous heritage railways of Yamaguchi and Oigawa
- Ride the Sagano Forest Railway, Tozan Mountain Railway, the coastal 'Resort' train, and a vintage tram charter in Hiroshima
- Enjoy a sumo wrestling demonstration in Tokyo and wacky fashions in Harajuku
- Cruise around the Matsushima Islands and Hiroshima Bay to Miyajima
- Explore historic temples, castles, and cultural sites in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Himeji
- Stay at a stunning new rice paddy hotel and a luxury mountain spa
- Marvel at the latest ultra-high-speed rail technology at the Mag-Lev test track
- Capture and climb the grand castles at Himeji, Hirosaki, and Kyoto
- Explore five world heritage sites and many more natural wonders
- Visit the unsurpassed modern railway museums in Tokyo and Kyoto
- Experience Japan's unique food culture at fine restaurants, including a traditional full-course Japanese hot-spring resort feast, and a night with The Singing Chef in Sendai



Barbara Wass

Barbara lives in the Blue Mountains and has a solid background in travel, tourism and hospitality. She has worked in wholesale and retail travel, then as an events coordinator in a 5-star hotel, before living and working in Japan for 2 years as a conversational English teacher with her husband Duncan. Once back in Australia, she managed of group of spa cabins and wedding venue, and for the next 10 years owned and managed a local Teahouse and Australian Gallery. Barbara has been part of the Railway Adventures tour leader team since April 2021 and loves being part of a like-minded group that supports a well-planned and inspirational itinerary, creating lifelong memories with enthusiastic passengers. She always enjoys having the opportunity of travelling and meeting new people, and has a real understanding of traveller's expectations and needs. She's also a member of Oral History NSW and her latest venture is recording individual life stories.

Duncan Wass

Duncan Wass grew up in Sth Australia. He switched from Road Design to theatre via Queensland Uni. in 1977, and met Scott in 1982 when they did the Tempest for Queensland Theatre Co.. After a hectic 5 year stint at QTC, La Boite and TN, he moved to Sydney and worked for JC Williamson, The O, and STC. He was in the inaugural cast of Les Miserables for Cameron Mackintosh. He also did a number of TV roles for the ABC, as well as some very small parts in a few movies. He spent 6 weeks as B1 in Bananas in Pyjamas, doing the first 40 episodes. Bell Shakespeare occupied his attention for 6 years to 1999, before he went with his new wife Barbara and taught English in Japan for a couple of years. They travelled extensively there, and have been back a number of times, as well as taking trips to the US, UK, France and Italy, Cambodia and the Phillipines. Back home, they ran a Teahouse and Gallery for ten years before establishing a holiday accommodation management business the Blue Mountains. Duncan loves the freedoms and camaraderie of train travel.

TOUR MAP

WHY TRAVEL WITH US

<image><figure>

The joy of travel is not confined to the destination. How you travel is a large and rich part of the experience. Railway Adventures offers a truly unique perspective on some of the world's most spectacular destinations, with the confidence that the journey will be just as magical and memorable as what is discovered at the end of the line.





Unique itineraries

Authentic local **experiences**



Expert local guides and operators



Fully escorted



Small **group sizes**



Customer satisfaction

SOME WAYS YOU'LL TRAVEL

Heritage, Steam or Tourist Railway

The best train trips possible, private luxury coach for off-train travel, guided walking where suitable, and other appropriate and appealing options to make exploration easy.



Yamaguchi steam train

Train
Coach
Boat

Sagano Forest Railway

Shinkansen 'Bullet' Train

Day 1 • Wednesday 12 April: ARRIVE TOKYO

Most flights arrive early in the morning. As we can't formally check in to our hotel until early afternoon, we've instead arranged the option of breakfast at the hotel and a morning tour of a few of Tokyo's iconic sites.

The hotel is only five minutes walk from Shinagawa Station with a direct connection to the airport, so it's an easy introduction to getting around Tokyo. Drop your bags, freshen up and enjoy a hearty breakfast at the hotel's signature restaurant before we head out.

Our morning tour kicks off with a visit to Tokyo's most significant Shinto monument – the Meiji Shrine. This monument dedicated to the memory of Emperor Meiji who ruled Japan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, oozes the dignified grandeur of history.

Adjacent to the Meiji Shrine is one of the fascinating microcosms of modern Tokyo – the Harajuku neighbourhood – Tokyo's fashion crucible and the home of some of the world's wackiest fashion trends. The tour will culminate with a visit to Tokyo's newest highlight, the Olympic Stadium, totally rebuilt for the 2020/1 Olympics on the site of the 1964 Olympic Stadium adjacent to Harajuku, to a design by Japan's rock-star architect of the moment, Kengo Kuma (*). Afterwards, we'll have our first get-together and briefing of the journey, in a private area over a re-energising pasta lunch, before checking in to the hotel and an afternoon of relaxation.

We'll re-group in the evening to take a short subway ride to the setting of our celebratory welcome dinner, a Japanese barbecue with views across the Tokyo evening skyline.

(*) The Olympic Stadium may close to visitors in case of other events taking place – final confirmation of this visit will be communicated during February 2023.

Overnight: The Strings Intercontinental Hotel, Shinagawa (B, L, D)

Day 2 • Thursday 13 April: TOKYO

Our exploration today will contrast the old and new cities of Tokyo. To see it all, we'll of course use the city's incomparable rail network. We'll start by visiting the 634 m tall Tokyo Sky Tree, recognised by Guinness World Records as the world's tallest tower. Taking the high-speed elevator to the observation platform, we'll enjoy a panorama that shows the sheer scale of Tokyo.

We'll then get straight to the city's roots by visiting Asakusa, the original village of Edo from which modern-day Tokyo has grown over the past 400-plus years. Next up is a visit to Sensoji, the city's oldest Buddhist temple, followed by a stroll along Nakamise Arcade, the market street connecting the temple to its famed Kaminari Gate.

After a sumo wrestler-style lunch, and a Sumo-Demo, we continue our introduction to Japan's unique culture with an afternoon visit to the Sumida Hokusai Museum, celebrating the uniquely Japanese art of woodblock printing, and its most famous practitioner, Katsushika Hokusai, a man credited with influencing not only Vincent Van Gogh but the whole Impressionist movement.

(The Edo Tokyo Museum is closed for major renovation until 2025)

In the evening, you may wish to join Scott and other fellow travellers for an informal social dinner close by in the heart of Shinagawa.

Overnight: The Strings Intercontinental Hotel, Shinagawa (B, L)

Day 3 • Friday 14 April: TOKYO

We have arranged separate luggage transport so for today, please pack an overnight bag as your main luggage will be sent by overnight secure transport to Hiroshima.

Today you have a few options. You can have a day exploring more of the city on your own or you may wish to join our guide for a trip to Ueno Park, originally a royal hunting park now home to many of Tokyo's major museums including the National Museum of Japan and several stunning Art Museums. Alternately you can take a tour of Japan's National Railway Museum in the city of Saitama. This extensive museum presents the history of Japan's railways with an impressive collection of interactive displays, cultural history, and a huge array of locomotives and carriages, from the steam, diesel, and, of course, the bullet train eras. This stunning building is built in the shape of a Bullet Train and the view from the roof is spectacular.

In the evening, you're free to enjoy the many delights of the city, easily accessible from the hotel's handy location.

Overnight: The Strings Intercontinental Hotel, Shinagawa (B)

Day 4 • Saturday 15 April: TOKYO - HIROSHIMA

After breakfast this morning, we depart Tokyo and travel by bullet train to Hiroshima via Himeji. Travelling South-West on the Tokaido line past Mt Fuji, which will be in view if the weather permits, and Osaka before stopping at Himeji, a small city west of Kobe famous as the home of Japan's finest castle. At Himeji Station, we board a coach for the spectacular Himeji Castle, affectionately known as 'White Heron Castle' for its elegance and particularly dazzling whiteness. Both a national treasure and World Heritage Site, it's a rarity among Japanese castles in remaining in its original form. It has not been rebuilt since it was first erected in the Middle Ages, taking 200 years to complete. Recent restoration work has made it even more spectacular.

We then continue to Hiroshima an hour further down the line and check into our hotel located conveniently beside the railway station. Dinner this evening has a particular local theme: the regional delicacy of Okonomiyaki.

Overnight: Sheraton Grand Hiroshima Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 5 • Sunday 16 April: HIROSHIMA - YAMAGUCHI - HIROSHIMA

Following breakfast at the hotel, we'll take the train to the city of lwakuni to visit the city's most famous landmark (and another of Japan's glorious little-known highlights), the Kintaikyo Bridge, a unique five-span edifice across the Nishiki River – a truly amazing piece of timber architecture. We'll follow this with a local lunch of giant grilled chicken and humungous rice balls at another uniquely Japanese exemplar, Irori Sanzoku Restaurant. After lunch, we'll drive to the charming town of Tsuwano, another of Japan's 'off-the-beaten-track' gems. Famous for its historical architecture, the white walls and red-tiled roofs add splashes of vibrant colour to the peaceful and unspoiled townscape. Keep an eye out for the carp swimming in the aqueducts flowing alongside the main street. At Tsuwano Station, we board SL Yamaguchi, a C-571 model steam engine that originally entered service in 1937. It has been lovingly restored to operate on the two-hour journey between Tsuwano and the coastal city of Yamaguchi, passing through classic Japanese country vistas en route.

We return to our hotel in Hiroshima later in the afternoon and enjoy a free evening.

Overnight: Sheraton Grand Hiroshima Hotel (B, L)

Day 6 • Monday 17 April: HIROSHIMA

This morning we begin our day by taking a local train and ferry to the island of Miyajima. Here another of the country's iconic images will greet us: the 'shrine in the sea'. The main shrine includes a picturesque pagoda, and the island's main street is a charming mishmash of bustling shops and restaurants. You have time to explore the captivating atmosphere of this sacred and ancient World Heritage-listed island shrine.

Overnight: Sheraton Grand Hiroshima Hotel (B, L)

Day 7 • Tuesday 18 April: HIROSHIMA - KYOTO

This morning after breakfast at the hotel we stroll down to the station to board the Bullet Train for the two-hour speed run to Kyoto. Our tour of Kyoto kicks off with a visit to Nijo Castle in the heart of the city to see the seat of power for the Shoguns who dominated Japan for centuries. From here we switch focus back to railways, to visit the newly opened Kyoto Railway Museum on the site of the city's famous Umekoji Railway Park. The Museum's core theme is 'railways revitalizing local communities and it has been created to balance historical rail exhibits with a variety of interactive areas aimed not only to demonstrate but educate visitors on advances in technology and safety. We'll see one of these, the 300sqm-plus Diorama, being operated. After lunch, at a traditional merchant's house, we then head to the north of the city to the famed Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), beautifully embodying many of the principles of traditional Japanese architecture. Back at the hotel, the evening is free to explore the many delights of Kyoto. In the late afternoon, we check into our hotel in the heart of the city.

Day 8 • Wednesday 19 April: KYOTO

This morning we venture out to the west of Kyoto, to see the part of the city most beloved by Kyotoites themselves, Arashiyama. The visit will start with a local train ride, followed by a scenic train journey on the Sagano Forest Railway along the Hozu River Valley. Walking up from the station, after a brief stop at a shrine dedicated to hairdressers, we'll drop into the Okochi Sanso Villa, the one-time home of one of Japan's most famous film stars of the early 20th Century, Denjirō Ökōchi, a veritable Japanese Charlie Chaplin. Here, we'll enjoy green tea and Japanese cake in the tea house of the superb gardens.

Then, we'll continue our stroll through the region's star attraction, the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove - the scale of which is genuinely breathtaking. Later, we return to our hotel by train and have the rest of the afternoon free to relax.

Overnight: Hotel Granvia, Kyoto (B)

Day 9 • Thursday 20 April: KYOTO - OIGAWA - HAKONE

We'll take a morning bullet train from Kyoto to the town of Kanaya, where we'll travel by local train to the departure point of the Oikawa steam train. We'll pass by vast green tea fields along the Oikawa River as it flows from the Southern Alps, while we listen to the soothing click-clack of the wheels of the carriage and may even catch glimpses of mighty Mount Fuji in the distance. Cherry Trees line the route and if the climate is kind, the display of blossoms along the route of our vintage train is a treat.

Later in the afternoon, we'll continue to the town of Hakone where we check in to our spa hotel. Relax in the superb natural hot-spring baths before a full-course Japanese dinner in the blissful peace of the Fuji-Hakone National Park. This evening, enjoy the cuisine and theatre of a Teppanyaki dinner. Overnight: Indigo Gora, Hakone (B, D)

Day 10 • Friday 21 April: HAKONE

This morning we take taxis to the famous Owakudani (Great Boiling Valley) area, where volcanic geysers fill the air 1,000m above sea level. After a walk along the mountainside, where we can enjoy dramatic views of Mt Fuji (weather permitting), we take the Hakone Ropeway even higher over the very peak of Mount Kamiyama - part of the large Hakone Volcano, the eruption of which created the dramatic beauty of the place.

From here we jump straight onto the Hakone cable car and then the Tozan Mountain Railway, as we make our way to the Hakone Open Air Museum. With the area's breathtaking natural beauty as a backdrop, the museum houses an expansive and impressive collection of sculpture and art, highlighted by the remarkable Picasso Pavilion, with more than 100 pieces by the 20th century's most iconic artist. After returning to our hotel for a break, you have an evening at leisure.

Overnight: Indigo Gora, Hakone (B)

Day 11 • Saturday 22 April: HAKONE - TSURUOKA

Once again we have arranged separate luggage transport so today, please pack an overnight bag as your main luggage will be sent by overnight secure transport to Tsuroka.

After breakfast this morning, we'll travel by coach through the countryside of the Chichibu area towards Mount Fuji for a visit to Japan's best-kept railway secret, the Maglev Linear Motor Car Centre. Here we'll see the next generation of bullet trains, operating at twice the speed of the current generation, and due to come into operation in 2027. We can also see one of the daily test runs of the current prototype at the centre. Following this, we'll head onto Fussa for lunch at a Sake Brewery. Our train travel continues in the afternoon via Omiya and the Yamagata Mini-Shinkansen line to Tsuruoka to settle into the extraordinary hotel, Suiden Terrace, a creation of one of Japan's top modern architects, Shigeru Ban. Later we enjoy dinner at Le Luna upstairs, an atmospheric former rice storehouse.

Overnight: Suiden Terrace, Tsuroka (B, L, D)

Day 12 • Sunday 23 April: TSURUOKA

After breakfast at the hotel, we head out on a tour of the Tsuruoka area of Yamagata, including a visit to the famous 5-story pagoda on Mt. Haguro, one of the three Holy Mountains of Dewa. We will also enjoy the areas stunning nature, incorporating a waterfall, tall pine forest, and the wild river. There's ample time to stroll the avenues of cherry blossoms at Tsuruoka Park before heading back to the hotel to relax and freshen up before the chance to join Scott for an optional dinner in Tsuruoka.

Overnight: Suiden Terrace Hotel, Tsuruoka (B)

Day 13 • Monday 24 April: TSURUOKA - AOMORI

Please pack an overnight bag as your main luggage will be sent by overnight secure transport to Sendai. We take a morning train to the historic city of Akita, where there is a short opportunity to buy lunch and stroll to the nearby Castle Park, well-endowed with cherry trees.

Then, in the afternoon, we continue our northward journey along the Gono Line, a coastal railway generally regarded as one of Japan's most scenic. This takes us to Aomori, the city at the northern tip of Japan's main island, Honshu, and on arrival there we'll take a short walk to our hotel. Tonight, we will be treated to a Chinese buffet.

Overnight: Hotel JAL City, Aomori, (B, D)

Day 14 • Tuesday 25 April: AOMORI - SENDAI

Check out and depart by train to Hirosaki, just a short ride south of Aomori. There, we board a coach to visit the Tsugaru Nebuta Village, focused on the Nebuta Culture which particularly defines the Northern area of Honshu. Explore the village here, and then see the majestic Hirosaki Castle and its famous Cherry Blossoms. Return to Aomori by coach and visit a local market for time at leisure to find your own lunch. In the afternoon we travel by Bullet Train to Sendai and check in at the hotel. Dinner is at leisure tonight.

Overnight: Westin Hotel, Sendai, (B)

Day 15 · Wednesday 26 April: SENDAI

While Sendai is very much a commercial hub connecting northern and central Japan, it is also the gateway to another of Japan's little-known jewels - the magnificent Matsushima Bay. And, like all bays, there is no better way to discover it than from the water. So, this morning, after a short train journey, we'll cruise among the more than 200 small, pine tree-covered islands dotting the bay and enjoy views that have been celebrated for centuries as some of Japan's most scenic and visit the incredible Zuiganji Temple that dates from the eighth century.

Later in the evening, we'll enjoy a special farewell dinner at Palinka with our friend, Yoseki San, 'The Singing Chef', and celebrate the end of our adventure. Overnight: The Westin, Sendai (B, D)

Day 16 • Thursday 27 April: SENDAI - TOKYO - DEPART (B)

This morning we have the option of a late checkout (midday) and free time in Sendai before returning to Tokyo in the early afternoon by bullet train, where we have the option to enjoy another night in this iconic city or transfer directly via Tokyo to the airport for your flight home or onwards for other travels. For those staying in Tokyo, tonight will be an evening at leisure.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO STAY AN EXTRA NIGHT AND DAY IN TOKYO

Overnight: The Strings Intercontinental Hotel, Shinagawa (B)

DAY 17 • Friday 28 April: TOKYO - DEPART (B) Late checkout (1:00 pm) is offered and you have the day at leisure.



WHAT'S **INCLUDED**

- 15 nights' accommodation in quality, centrally located hotels, all 5-star or the best on offer, including a traditional Ryokan hotel and Onsen
- Daily breakfasts, 7 lunches, and 6 dinners
- Drinks with welcome and farewell dinners
- Luxury chartered coaches, with luggage transport on all major legs
- Sightseeing with expert local guides providing commentary and assistance
- 14-day JR Rail Pass in Green Class (first class), where available
- All excursions and entrance fees to attractions as listed in the itinerary
- Services of your expert Australia tour leader
- English-speaking local guides and the services of your experienced Australian host throughout

WHAT WE **DON'T INCLUDE**

- International flights
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- · Meals and services not mentioned in the itinerary
- All other personal expenses such as drinks, phone calls, laundry services, and camera fees where applicable
- Excursions listed as optional and extra in the brochure
- Travel Insurance (a condition of travel)
- *Japanese Visa (if required)

*Please note current rules dictate that travellers can arrive and depart at different times to other group members, however they must be escorted during these transfers. This cost is additional.

Please note that on a few days your luggage will travel separately, and you will be required to take an overnight bag for a single night before being re-united with your luggage the next day.

FITNESS RATING

🛲 🛲 Two 'Locos'

The most common grading for our tours. Two loco itineraries offer many activities that require a little extra fitness – walking on uneven ground, climbing hills to enter towns or historic sites, walks of 1–3 kilometres as well as getting on and off transport. You need to have good mobility and aerobic fitness and be able to manage your own luggage.





SOME PLACES YOU'LL STAY

Hand-picked hotels and resorts based on location, customer feedback, value and atmosphere.

Please Note: Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.







PRICE

Per person twin share	\$11,950
Single supplement	\$2,795
Deposit (per person) \$1000 at	t time of booking
Final payment due by	11 February 2023

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

We have suggested flights for this itinerary depending on your departure point from Australia, any preferred stopovers enroute and/or your planned pre- and post-tour activities. We can also investigate your preferred airline and offer you a solution based on connection times and prices. Contact 1300 800 977 to discuss your options.

HOW TO BOOK

Downloadabookingformfromourwebsiteandfollowtheeasysteps to getting on board. Alternatively, contact us on 1300 800 977 or info@railwayadventures.com if you'd prefer a form be sent to you. Complete the form and submit it, along with your \$1000 pp deposit to secure your place on the tour.

DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

We endeavour to have all the details of our tours correct at the time of printing. However, sometimes factors beyond our control may affect the final inclusions and prices. These factors may include, but not be limited to; significant fluctuations in currency exchange rates, individual hotel/restaurant decisions that may affect bookings; weather events forcing a change of itinerary; unexpected trackwork on rail lines, unexpected closure of site attractions and so forth. Therefore, items mentioned in the brochure such as quoted prices, hotels and inclusions are subject to change. If a change is imposed on us, we will endeavour to ensure the substitute is of the same quality that you've paid for.

TOUR PACE / LEVEL OF FITNESS:

Our itineraries are designed to make the most of each destination, so a reasonable amount of activity is built into most days, which is why we call them adventures. Our philosophy is to offer you the best experience possible, while leaving you, our guest, the flexibility to pace yourself and choose how much or how little you want to do. Each Railway Adventures tour incorporates periods of free time for your own exploration and relaxation.

While you don't need to be a 'gym junky', a reasonable level of fitness is required for most of our tours. The ability to manage your own luggage, get on and off all manner of trains and coaches, walk for extended periods, stand comfortably, and climb steps and stairs will ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your adventure.

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to assisting with flight suggestions and bookings, we can also give you some ideas of what you could do before and after your Railway Adventure.

We can also organise your all-important Travel Insurance for you. Call our office on 1300 800 977 if you would like to discuss options.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For more information on factors such as travel insurance requirements, fitness levels, fees and charges, tour cancellations, payment schedules and so on, please refer to our Terms and Conditions, which accompany the booking form. They can also be found on our website.



1300 800 977 railwayadventures.com



Travel Accredited Lic #A14416





THE RAILWAY ADVENTURES STORY

Railway Adventures was launched in 2012 by well-known Australian TV personality and self-confessed rail fan, Scott McGregor. A lifelong passion for travel has taken Scott to scores of countries and his preference for rail has seen him exploring many of the world's great train journeys, confirming his belief that the most relaxing, romantic and engaging way to see a country is by rail. He even has his own life-sized, fully restored opulent train accommodation atop the Great Dividing Range near Mudgee, offering guests a rare and special bush retreat experience.

ATOD

Since 2012 Railway Adventures has thrilled and delighted more than 1200 travellers on over 100 tours from Sweden to Sri Lanka, Tasmania to Transylvania, Britain to Burma, Venice to Vietnam and all manner of shorter adventures in our own wonderful country. Scott's numerous rail-themed TV documentaries, his ongoing involvement in rail heritage and his extensive connections with private train owners around the world, guarantee that every Railway Adventures tour is exclusive, entertaining and authentic. 04 August 2022.

Your travel agent