

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Sapporo Snow Festival (JIF 2018)



TRIPDURATION
13
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: JIF

Trip Highlights - Sapporo Snow Festival

- ✓ Sapporo - Experience the annual snow festival in the capital of Hokkaido, Japan's northern island. Odori Park is home to huge snow sculptures and dramatic ice carvings
- ✓ Otaru Lantern Festival - Stroll along the banks of the canal, lit by thousands of tiny candles and snow lanterns
- ✓ Tokyo - Explore the neon bright capital city, gateway to Japan
- ✓ Bullet Train - Whizz across the country in comfort at an average speed of 300 kilometres an hour
- ✓ Kyoto - See the traditional side of Japan, stunning temples, immaculate zen gardens and the geisha district of Gion
- ✓ Snow Monkeys - Visit the bathing beauties making the most of the hot springs at Yudanaka Onsen

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 12 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals: 12 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 5 dinners
Start Point: Join trip: Tokyo
End Point: Trip ends: Tokyo
Transport: Bus, Train, Boat, Flight
Countries: Japan

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Sapporo Snow Festival

This exciting journey takes us to the far north of Japan where we make the most of the winter temperatures, taking an ice breaker cruise in the Sea of Okhotsk before spending time admiring the incredible snow sculptures at the annual Sapporo Snow Festival. We also spend time exploring ultra modern Tokyo, exploring zen gardens in ancient Kyoto and visiting the snow monkeys at Yudanaka.

Why Book this trip

From food to festivals, scenery to sledding, history to hilltops this is a varied tour where you will be well and truly off the beaten tourist path. This tour is ideal for anyone wanting to learn more about Japanese culture whilst experiencing the unique Sapporo Snow Festival.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour in Tokyo

Our tour starts in Tokyo, the modern day capital of Japan.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



 **Included Meals:** Dinner

DAY 2 Visit ancient Asakusa Temple and modern Harajuku

It is said that over one quarter of Japanese live within a 50 km radius of the centre of Tokyo. The result is a bustling and exciting city, the economic powerhouse of Asia. Our first introduction to this unique culture is when we take a walking tour of the city highlights. We visit the Meiji shrine and Shinjuku area, where the latest electronic gadgets can be seen in neon-fronted shops before making our way to the traditionally styled Hamarikyu gardens. The gardens are located in central Tokyo and feature several seawater ponds which change levels as the tides rise and fall. We then board a boat for a short journey along the Sumida-gawa river to the Asakusa Temple, Tokyo's oldest temple. This journey offers a totally different perspective of Tokyo, as we sail past high rise apartments, secluded gardens and busy warehouses.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Fly to Abashiri; discover the Meiji-era Prison Museum

This morning we leave the capital and after a short transfer by train and monorail we take a flight to Abashiri, located on the Okhotsk Coast. The town is most famous for the Kangoku, a prison opened in 1892 with a fearsome reputation for harsh winter conditions. Nowadays the prison has been transformed in to an interesting museum which we will visit, with chance to test out the cells if only for a few minutes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4 Cruise on the Sea of Okhotsk; scenic train to Sapporo

Abashiri is Japan's northern most major city located at 44 degrees north latitude. From mid-January to late March the waters here are covered in drift ice and we will be taking a cruise through the Sea of Okhotsk to get to the main drift ice areas. A variety of wild animals can be seen including seals and sea eagles resting on the ice. From the ship you can sometimes spot fox and deer on the coast. The boat ride takes about one hour in total depending on ice conditions. We take the afternoon train to Sapporo, a scenic route with views across the snow covered landscape.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5 View snow sculptures at Sapporo's annual festival

We spend the full day exploring the annual Snow and Ice festival. The festival first began in 1950 but gained worldwide recognition in 1972 when Sapporo hosted the winter Olympic Games. We will see all of the main venues that have snow statues and ice sculptures including Odori Park, Tsudome dome and the main street in Susukino, Sapporo's entertainment quarter. We will also take time to stop at one of the many ice bars that pop up during the festival. In the evening there is an option to visit the Sapporo Brewery for a tour.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Day trip by train to explore Otaru's lantern festival

Today we take the train to Otaru, a small town set along the Otaru Canal. Once a year it is home to the Snow Light Path festival. The snow covered town is decorated with small snow statues decorated with lights, particularly alongside the canal. Often there are also small floating candles in the water. As well as the lanterns there are often food stalls set up alongside the canal so we can sample some local snacks as we make our way through the displays. We return to Sapporo by train in the late evening.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Take the train to old trading port of Hakodate

Leaving Sapporo we take the train to Hakodate located on the south-west corner of Hokkaido Island. Hakodate was one of the first ports to open to foreign trade and as such has a distinct blend of Japanese and Western architecture. We wander through Motomachi which gives an insight in to how the traders lived and how the cultures merged. In the evening we take a trip to Mount Hakodate for spectacular views down across the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8 Discover the morning market; flight and train to Kyoto

We rise early this morning to visit the Hakodate morning market. Starting at 6am in the winter the traders sell fresh seafood including crabs (kani) and sea urchins (uni) as well as fresh fruit and vegetables. There are plenty of opportunities to snack as we wander through the stalls. After the market we make our way back to the airport for the short flight to Osaka where we take the train to Kyoto, the old Imperial capital. Kyoto is the cradle of all things uniquely Japanese and the only large city to escape bombing in WWII. It was the Imperial capital for more than 1000 years and was at the heart of the events that shaped Japan's destiny. Signs of the past are visible throughout the city in its grand temples and palaces and also the many traditional shops selling wares that have been produced for centuries. This afternoon we visit the Kiyomizudera Temple and the Gion Geisha district.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 Walk through the temples and zen gardens of Kyoto

Kyoto is regarded as the place to see everything you expect to experience in Japan, with more than 2000 temples and shrines, many set in manicured landscaped gardens. But it is also a modern city. We spend a full day exploring including a visit to the temple of the Golden Pavillion, Arashiyama Bamboo grove and the nearby Ryonji temple with its beautiful zen gardens.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Free day to explore Kyoto. Option to visit nearby Nara

Today is a free day to explore Kyoto at your leisure. You may wish to take a trip to nearby Nara, home to the Todaji Temple, Big Buddha and the Kasuga Shrine. Your Tour Leader will be on hand to give you tips on where to visit and make the best of your time in this beautiful city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Take the bullet train to Nagano

Today we take our first journey on the Shinkansen, Japan's bullet train. Travelling at speeds of up to 300km per hour, with quiet carriages and departures running to a strict timetable this is the ultimate in train travel. We combine this with a slightly slower local train as we make our way to Nagano.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Reflect at Zenkoji Temple before meeting Yudanaka's snow monkeys. Take the bullet train to Tokyo

After breakfast we pay a visit to the nearby 7th century Zenko-ji temple complex. We can experience the daily workings of temple life, with a chance to watch the monks taking their morning prayers. After a stop for lunch we head to Yudanaka, home to the famous 'snow monkeys'. During the cold winter months these clever simians take to the hot springs to keep warm. There are plenty of onsens (shared baths) which we can try out as well, all monkey free. In the late afternoon we board the Shinkansen and make our way back to Tokyo for our last night in this incredible country.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **13** Tour ends in Tokyo

Our tour ends in Tokyo this morning after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 5 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Japan

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 20.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Japan

Bottle of Beer £: 4.00

Water £: 1.00 - 2.00

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Sapporo Brewery visit - 3000 Yen per person including dinner

Day trip to Nara - 2250 Yen per person

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow £20 for tips.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Japan

ATM Availability: All post offices have international ATMs. Some other ATMs do not accept Western bank/credit cards. Your tour leader will advise you locally.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques: It should be noted that outside of the major cities it is difficult to change traveller's cheques. Where available it takes 30-45 minutes, the best places to exchange them is at the airport on arrival.

Local Currency: Yen.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: It is preferable to take money in Yen or traveller's cheques.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!

The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducing Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Japan: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Vaccinations & Protection

Japan

Nothing compulsory. We recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. The use or possession of Vicks inhalers and some other common prescription and over-the-counter medicines (e.g. for allergies and sinus problems or even certain mild painkillers, such as those containing certain levels of codeine) are banned under Japan's strictly enforced anti-stimulant drugs law. Customs officials may not be sympathetic if you claim ignorance about these medicines. If in any doubt about customs procedures for such items, you should check with the nearest Japanese Embassy before visiting Japan.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Japan

Japan's climate is mostly temperate, with five distinct seasons. Summer is from June to September with temperatures reaching 30°C, although it can vary from warm to very hot. After mid-July. July and August can be humid. Spring and Autumn are mild throughout Japan. Winter, October to April, is cold with snowfall. The main rainy season is June. Japan can be prone to short, tropical cyclones in August to October. October November although cooler is a great time to see the Autumn colours.

Clothing

Rain gear is essential. You will need warm clothing for this trip as both daytime and night time temperatures are cold. Expect it to be around -1 degrees centigrade during the day and sinking to minus 8 during the night.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle to save on purchase of plastic bottles and a small torch. Hairdryers are provided at all the hotels.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots with good grips for walking around the ice festival. There will be plenty of snow so good waterproof footwear is a must.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. We recommend a compact suitcase with wheels or good quality rucksack. While in Japan we will make use of their efficient luggage transfer service to transfer your main bags between Sapporo and Kyoto and from Kyoto to Tokyo. For the nights spent in Hakodate and Nagano you will need to bring overnight items in your daypack as there will be no access to your main bag.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

Transport

If you have pre-arranged an arrival transfer with Explore you will be met in the arrivals hall at Tokyo Airport (either Narita or Haneda depending on the airline you are flying with). Please look out for your name on a sign board and/or an Explore signboard. You will be transferred to the start hotel by public shuttle bus, which may stop at up to two other hotels, before dropping you at the joining hotel where you will meet the rest of the group. A voucher for this shuttle bus will be sent to you prior to departure. At the end of the tour your Tour Leader will provide you with a metro ticket to travel from the hotel to Fukuoka Airport.

Please provide Explore with your flight details at the earliest possible opportunity so we can arrange the transfer accordingly.

General Information

Country details

Japan

Population: 127,960,000

Size of Country: 377,944 sq km

Major Language: Japanese

Religion: Buddhism, Christian and Shinto

Time Difference to GMT: +9

Electric Supply & Plugs

Japan

2 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2018 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2018. 2019/20 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2019.

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