

**FINAL ITINERARY**  
 (bring this with you – and leave a copy with your family)



**17 DAYS**  
 featuring  
 exquisite  
 colourful  
**JAPAN**

- Tokyo
- Nikko
- Nagano
- Kawaguchi
- Hakone
- Osaka
- Nara
- Kyoto
- Sagano
- Hiroshima
- Nagasaki

departs  
**March 26**  
**2018**

- travelling by  
bullet-train
- touring by  
luxury coach

midlife madness in

# JAPAN

with your tour leaders

**FINAL**

John & Robyn Cooney



HOUSE OF TRAVEL



## OUR ITINERARY

### Let the fun begin ...

**THIS IS SO EXCITING! EACH SPRING, JAPAN'S LANDSCAPE IS LITTERED WITH ZILLIONS OF PINK & WHITE blossoms** – stunning colour that's celebrated throughout the entire country. And we Kiwis will be there, on the spot, to immerse ourselves in all that's uniquely Japanese. Our journey starts in bustling **Tokyo** with its impressive gardens, enormous fish market, and devoted sushi-masters. Later we enjoy a step-back-in-time theme-park, **Edomura Nikko**, and witness famous 'snow monkeys' bathing in steaming hot springs. Then it's on to scenic **Nagano** and geothermal **Hakone** for views of **Mt Fuji** ... followed by **Osaka's** castle, **Kyoto's** temples and **Sagano's** bamboo grove ... ending finally in poignant **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**. If you want exquisite scenery, enchanting culture, and wonderful cuisine ... you couldn't have chosen a better tour than this Mad Midlife adventure in Japan.

Out of a long list of sightseeing possibilities we've selected what we believe are the very best options, *plus* we've added some nice extra touches of our own. What we've ended up with, we're sure you'll agree, is a superb all-inclusive package. However, this day-to-day programme is **still subject to change** (in discussion with our expert local guides and at the discretion of your Tour Leaders).

Here at last, as accurate as we can get it, is our **FINAL ITINERARY**. Have a good read, and whet your appetite ...





## Midlife Madness in Japan Final Itinerary March-April 2018

### MARCH

Monday 26

**FLIGHT NZ 99:**  
Auckland to  
Tokyo  
depart 9:55am  
arrive 4:50pm

**HOTEL:**  
Grand Nikko  
Tokyo Daiba

**MEALS:** D

### **“Konnichiwa!” Japan ... here we come!**

Yeehaa, it’s actually happening! We depart Auckland International Airport this morning, arriving at **Tokyo’s** Narita Airport late in the afternoon. We’re met by our Japanese guide and transferred to the **Grand Nikko Tokyo Daiba Hotel** for the next three nights – with excellent access to Tokyo Big Sight (exhibition centre) and views of Tokyo Tower, Rainbow Bridge and Tokyo Bay.

Japan’s dazzling capital has everything you could ask for in a city: award-winning architecture, fantastic public transport, and more cafes and restaurants than you could visit in a lifetime. We’ve got **Midlife Madness Welcome Dinner** tonight in our hotel ...

Tuesday 27

**HOTEL:**  
Grand Nikko  
Tokyo Daiba

**MEALS:** B, L, D

### **Tokyo**

Wakey-wakey Kiwis! We’ve got lots to see in Tokyo today, so time to get out of bed! We’re visiting the famous **Meiji Shrine**, dedicated to the late 19th-century emperor who opened Japan to the West ... broad, tree-lined **Omotesando Street** ... the ancient **Asakusa Sensogi Temple**, founded in 628AD by local fishermen ... **Akihabara Electronic Town** (crammed with the craziest gadgets you’ll ever see) ... and **Ueno Park**, a popular spot for cherry blossom parties, with more than 1000 cherry trees lining the streets. We break at a local restaurant for lunch ... and share dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

Wednesday 28

**HOTEL:**  
Grand Nikko  
Tokyo Daiba

**MEALS:** B

### **Tokyo**

This morning, for something a little different, we tour the vast **Tsukiji Fish Market** and learn from a local chef how to make (and eat) sushi. We then visit **Ginza Mitsukoshi**, Japan’s oldest surviving department store, and check out the **Imperial Palace Plaza** (a park surrounding the main residence of the Imperial Family) ... and **Hamarikyu Garden** (created by Shogun Tokugawa). Finally, we head up **Tokyo Tower** (13 metres taller than Eiffel) for some birds’-eye views of this stunning city. Dinner tonight – your call!

Thursday 29

**HOTEL:**  
Kinugawa Park

**MEALS:** B, L, D

### **Tokyo ... Nikko**

Leaving the fast-paced capital, we plunge into Japanese history and culture, two and a half hours drive from Tokyo. The town of **Nikko** was a center of Shinto and Buddhist mountain



worship for many centuries. It sits at the entrance to a scenic National Park, and is most famous for its World Heritage shrines and temples – including the lavishly decorated **Toshogu**, final resting place of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the shogunate that ruled Japan for over 250 years (until 1868) ... and **Taiuinbyo**, the mausoleum of the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu.

We tour both sites, then visit the **Tamozawa Imperial Villa** – a splendidly restored imperial palace dating from the Edo and Meiji eras and showcasing superb artisanship, including brilliant screen paintings and serene garden views framed from nearly every window.

We're at the **Kinugawa Park Hotel** for the next two nights – and at a local eatery for dinner.

Friday 30

**HOTEL:**  
Kinugawa Park  
**MEALS:** B

## Edo Wonderland

Today, for something totally different, we head out to Nikko's **Edomura Nikko** – a Japanese wonderland that allows us to step back in time and explore the Edo period (17<sup>th</sup> century) with its warriors, merchants, craftsmen and peasants. Ever wondered what it was like to be a ninja, a nobleman, a samurai swordsman or a kimono-robed courtesan? Well, wonder no longer! This popular, fun-filled theme-park recreates the costuming, weaponry, crafts, food and day-to-day life of Japanese society back in the day – with interactive theatre, workshops, stalls, etc.

Saturday 31

**HOTEL:**  
Metropolitan  
Nagano  
**MEALS:** B, D

## Tokyo ... Nagano

Question: Where in the world can you find monkeys enjoying a hot bath in the middle of mountains? Answer: In the **Jigokudani Monkey Park**. Which is where we go today, after a morning drive through Nikko National Park. An area called Hell's Valley, known for its heavy winter snowfalls, is home to large groups of Japanese Macaques – also known as Snow Monkeys – that regularly bathe in the steaming natural 'onsen' (spa-pools). Bring your camera and prepare to be enchanted!

Then we continue by coach to the temple-town of **Nagano** (mountain-ringed site of the 1998 Winter Olympics) and the **Metropolitan Nagano Hotel**. Dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

APRIL

Sunday 1

**HOTEL:**  
Metropolitan  
Nagano  
**MEALS:** B, D

## Nagano ... Matsumoto ... Kawaguchi

We enjoy a morning's sightseeing in **Nagano**, including a visit to **Zenkoji Temple** (revered for more than 1400 years as Japan's primary Buddhist centre) ... and one of Japan's largest **wasabi** farms. (If you're in the mood, you can try your tastebuds on fresh wasabi, wasabi paste, wasabi pickles, wasabi noodles, wasabi curry, wasabi sausages, wasabi dressing, wasabi beer, wasabi juice, wasabi cream and wasabi chocolate – yum!

Following lunch on our own, we head for **Matsumoto Castle**, the oldest surviving wooden samurai fortress in Japan. Built by the Ogasawara clan in 1504 and painted a brooding black to deter would-be attackers, it was nicknamed '*Karasujo*' (Crow Castle).



We then continue with a 90-min drive to scenic **Lake Kawaguchi**, where we visit the **Ichiku Kubota Museum**, named after the artist who revived the lost art of Tsujigahana silk dyeing, used to decorate elaborate kimonos during the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). Dinner tonight in the **Motosu View Hotel**.

Monday 2

**HOTEL:**  
Osaka Daiichi  
**MEALS:** B, L, D

### Kawaguchi ... Hakone ... Osaka

Today begins with a drive to **Hakone**, famous for its hot springs, natural beauty and stunning views. From there, we ride the **Hakone Ropeway** (cable-car) up Mt Owakudani, gliding over rumbling, steaming sulphurous vents. Japanese legend says that, if you can eat a hard-boiled egg from the hot springs in this volcanic area, you'll add seven years to your life – so that's something you might like to try!

On a clear day (from the top) you can see forever ... including Japan's highest and most worshipped mountain: **Mt Fuji**. We follow lunch at a local restaurant with a cruise on **Lake Ashi**, then end the afternoon on a hi-speed bullet-train to **Osaka** (Japan's second-largest metro area after Tokyo) and dinner plus shut-eye in the **Daiichi Hotel**.

Tuesday 3

**HOTEL:**  
Noku Kyoto  
**MEALS:** B, L, D

### Osaka ... Nara ... Kyoto

We begin the morning with great views from **Osaka Castle** – one of Japan's most famous landmarks (which played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century of the Azuchi-Momoyama period). Then we head to the city of **Nara**, Japan's first permanent capital (crammed with World Heritage Sites, temples and cultural significance) where we check out **Todaiji Temple** (its Great Buddha Hall houses the world's largest bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana, known in Japanese as *Daibutsu*) ... **Nara Park** (with herds of free-roaming deer) ... and the Shinto **Kasuga Shrine** (first built in 768AD by order of Emperor Shotoku).

A stroll through **Naramachi**, the old-town merchant district where the atmosphere of the past has been preserved in houses, museums and temples, is followed by lunch ... a transfer to **Kyoto** (one-time Imperial Capital and geisha-girl centre, on the island of **Honshu**) ... and check-in to the **Noku Kyoto Hotel** for the next three nights. Dinner tonight? Somewhere local and yummy!

Wednesday 4

**HOTEL:**  
Noku Kyoto  
**MEALS:** B, L

### Kyoto

**Kyoto** is Japan's cultural heart, known for its Buddhist temples, gorgeous gardens and colourful shrines. We start our busy day with a tour of three temples (*don't worry: they're all different and each worth a look-see*): the **Kinkakuji Temple** ... the **Ryoanji Temple** ... and (after lunch at a local eatery) the **Kiyomizu Temple**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site perched on a hill overlooking the Kyoto basin. Later, we get to wander down two attractive, sloping pedestrian streets, **Ninenzaka** and **Sannenzaka**, lined with beautifully restored teahouses and flowering cherry trees. Dinner – your decision.



Thursday 5

### Kyoto ... Sagano

**HOTEL:**  
Noku Kyoto

**MEALS:** B

Today, for a change of pace, we enter a different world: the **Sagano Bamboo Grove** (a vast forest of thick green bamboo which seems to tower endlessly in every direction). We then visit **Tenryuji Temple** (a sprawling Zen complex with Kyoto's finest garden plus fabulous mountain views ... **Nijo Castle** (former powerbase of Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu) ... and finally **Arashiyama** (Storm Mountain) with its 'Moon Crossing Bridge' (Togetsukyo) – very popular for cherry blossom viewing.

We've worked for it, we've earned it, and now we've got it: an afternoon and evening at leisure!

Friday 6

### Kyoto ... Hiroshima

**HOTEL:**  
Grand Prince  
Hiroshima

**MEALS:** B, D

In the decades since that dreadful day in August 1945, **Hiroshima** has rebuilt itself as one of Japan's most laidback, vibrant cities – full of wide boulevards and art museums, great food and welcoming people. We spend the morning aboard another bullet-train, rushing from Kyoto to Hiroshima, where (in the afternoon) we visit the sobering **Peace Memorial Park & Museum** ... the **Atomic Bomb Dome** (the only structure left standing in the area where the first atomic bomb exploded) ... and the **Sukkeien Garden**, where valleys, mountains and forests are represented in miniature along with ancient tea-houses (restored after the bomb).

Tonight and tomorrow night we're in the **Grand Prince Hiroshima Hotel**.

Saturday 7

### Hiroshima ... Miyajima

**HOTEL:**  
Grand Prince  
Hiroshima

**MEALS:** B

Today we take a short ferry ride out to **Miyajima Island**, a small wooded outcrop (regarded as an 'Island of Gods') located on the beautiful Seto Inland Sea. Here we ride the **Mt Misen Ropeway** (gondola) for spectacular views ... visit the **Daishon Temple**, a sacred historic complex deep in the forest ... inspect the **Five Story Pagoda**, a stunning vermilion-coloured masterpiece built in 1407 ... do some shop-shop-shopping in **Omotesando Street** (the liveliest place in Miyajima) ... and take in (as close to high tide as possible) the famous **Torii Gate**, entrance to the Itsukushima Shrine, known worldwide for being built over water and seemingly floating on the sea. Lunch and dinner today – your own arrangement.

Sunday 8

### Hiroshima ... Nagasaki

**HOTEL:**  
ANA Crown Plaza  
Nagasaki

**MEALS:** B, D

Fasten your seatbelts, folks, because this morning we enjoy one final ride (flight?) on a speeding bullet-train to the city of **Nagasaki** – a name synonymous with the dropping of the second atomic bomb (three days after Hiroshima). Inevitably, this history overshadows everything else, yet today Nagasaki is a vibrant, charming and totally unique gem that begs to be explored. Our afternoon tour includes sober photos and artefacts in the **Atomic Bomb Museum**, the **Peace Park** (presided over by a 10-tonne bronze statue) and the profoundly moving **Peace Memorial**.



We also visit the **Glover Garden** (an outdoor museum) and the **Mt Inasa Ropeway** (glass-sided gondola) rising 333 metres above sea level to a magnificent observation platform – before heading to our hotel for our last two nights: the **Nagasaki ANA Crowne Plaza**.

Monday 9

**HOTEL:**  
ANA Crown Plaza  
Nagasaki

**MEALS:** B, D

## Nagasaki ... Hashima Island

The small island of **Hashima** (about 15 km from Nagasaki) was once a bustling community of 5000 people, who lived alongside the mines they worked. Abandoned in the 1970s, the island and its buildings had been left to the elements. But calls for its preservation, a cameo role in the James Bond movie *Skyfall*, and recognition by Unesco have all helped make this once-forgotten isle a now popular, ghostly attraction. Hashima is also known as Gunkanjima ('battleship island') – so named because of its ship-like silhouette.

Following our morning tour, the afternoon (along with lunch) is yours to enjoy at leisure. Don't get lost, because this evening, at a time and place yet to be announced, we'll share our **Midlife Madness Farewell Dinner ...**

Tues 10/Wed 11

**FLIGHT NH 664:**  
Nagasaki to Tokyo  
(Haneda Airport)  
depart 11:05am  
arrive 12:45pm

**FLIGHT NZ 90:**  
Tokyo  
(Narita Airport)  
to Auckland  
depart 6:30pm  
arrive 8:00am

**MEALS:** B

## all good things come to an end ...

Our **Mad Midlife Adventure in Japan** is, sadly, over ... and the time has come for us to head for home. We farewell Nagasaki, departing by plane for Tokyo, then connect with our early evening (overnight) flight to Auckland on Air New Zealand.

We've had a BALL, haven't we ... and we've got memories and photos to prove it!

So "Sayonara, Japan!" (Goodbye ...)

**Is everybody happy?**

**You bet your life we are!**