



retreat | recreate
Japan Blue Tour 2027
Trip Notes *(as at OCT 2026)*

Konnichiwa!
Welcome to our 2027 Japan Blue (Indigo) Tours. Steeped in centuries of tradition, yet hyper modern and avant garde, Japan is a feast for all the senses. The crowds, plethora of shopping opportunities and skyscrapers of Osaka are one side of the story; but look carefully and you'll find pockets of tranquil beauty unlike anything else in Asia – the unmistakable scent of a sukumo indigo vat, the beauty of an ancient garden or the fleeting glimpse of a geisha. The indigo textiles of Japan encompass the country's deep respect for cultural tradition, meditation, history and beauty. We hope you enjoy our exploration of Japan and its indigo traditions.

Please see the itinerary for a day to day run down of activities and tour details. These Trip Notes function as a kind of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) and an adjunct to the itinerary.

Tour Dates
18 January - 2 February
Fully escorted by:
- A&F Japan guide
- retreat|recreate host

22 February - 9 March
Fully escorted by:
- A&F Japan guide

Itinerary disclaimer
Some changes to the itinerary may occur due to inclement weather or circumstances beyond our control. While we do our best to prevent this happening, it may be unavoidable. It can also happen with little notice so please bear with us if we have to make modifications to the itinerary.

Please note this itinerary was prepared many months before departure. Accordingly, we may make slight amendments closer to departure. We'll always let you know of any proposed changes. Please note one or two activities are still TBC, as marked on the itinerary.

Included activities
Included activities are those specifically listed in the itinerary; any marked as optional are at additional cost. Any activities not outlined in the itinerary that you choose to undertake independently, are at your own expense. None of the included activities are compulsory however if you take time out from the scheduled itinerary and choose not to participate in any of the included activities on this itinerary, the cost of those activities will not be refunded. Of course, we hope and expect that you'll enjoy and participate in our itinerary. We've researched and sourced some fabulous workshops and studio visits, lined up visits to some excellent museums and we hope that if you have signed up to this tour, you intend to participate in the itinerary to the fullest extent.

Is this trip suitable for you?
This trip is for active, adventurous, handcraft-loving women who have a curiosity to delve deep into the Japanese culture, exploring it through the lens of its indigo handcraft traditions. You don't need to be an accomplished or experienced indigo or craft practitioner; an interest in and appreciation for the handmade is sufficient. You should be a fit, active traveller (see requirements below) who understands the importance of being a generous and tolerant group member and who values socially responsible travel.

Health, Fitness and Mobility
Please carefully and realistically consider your mobility and health when determining if this trip is right for you.

All travellers must be in excellent physical health and have good mobility to fully participate on this trip. Due to recent experiences on some tours we have made the decision to require all potential travellers to submit a Fitness to Travel declaration, to ensure all travellers are physically suited to our tours. This declaration must be submitted with your Application Form. The specific physical requirements for this tour are outlined on the Fitness to Travel Declaration and below. Travellers should be able to:

- spend much of the day on your feet in studios, workshops, museums etc
- walk at a moderate pace to keep up with the guide and group
- manage stairs
- sit on the floor for the duration of some meals, demonstrations, workshops etc
- squat or bend over a dye vat during a dyeing workshop. While some vats are at waist level, many are buried in the ground
- navigate arrival and departure airports without assistance
- manage your own luggage
- embark and disembark buses, coaches, trains and aeroplanes without assistance
- use shower over bath facilities as it is not possible to guarantee availability of separate showers
- cope with an overnight temple stay accommodation (in monastic quarters) where the bed is a thin futon (mattress) on the floor and bathroom facilities are communal (an onsen)
- be able to satisfactorily participate in the full tour program as described.
- This trip is not for you if your fitness is compromised or you use mobility aids. Please carefully consider your physical abilities and contact us if you have any queries before applying for a place. We reserve the right to decline an application if we deem

your fitness or mobility levels to be a detriment to your own and others' satisfactory participation in the tour
- The minimum age is 18 at the time of travel
- retreat|recreate is able to provide details on mandatory health requirements; however, we are not medical experts. It is your responsibility to ensure that you obtain medical advice at least two months prior to travel for the latest vaccinations, health requirements and recommendations for this destination
- You must carry face masks and your own personal first aid kit at all times, containing pain relief, bandaids, motion sickness pills, etc, in addition to any personal medications or other requirements (eg spare glasses, contact lenses, asthma puffers etc). For legal reasons we are prohibited from dispensing any type of drugs including antibiotics and headache tablets. Please ensure that you are personally and adequately prepared as flights, bus trips, lots of walking, weather and unfamiliar food can take their toll
- We strongly recommend all our travellers are up to date with the recommended Covid-19, flu and tetanus vaccination schedule. You may also wish to be vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis or measles if recommended by your health professional
- If you exhibit flu, cold or Covid-like symptoms while on tour, you will be required to take precautionary measures to reduce the risk of transmission, including wearing a mask around others.

Accommodation

Accommodation on this tour is on a twin share basis if you are travelling with a friend or relative, or on a single room basis if you are travelling alone (single supplement will apply).

IMPORTANT: Please note our policy regarding solo travelers. In the past, solo travelers on our Japan textile tours have had the option to twin share with another solo traveller. However, due to the very small size of Japanese hotel rooms and feedback from previous guests, we no longer pair up strangers in twin rooms. (Note, solo twin share options are still available on our tours in other destinations, just not in Japan).

The hotel ratings on this trip are rated 3 to 4 stars. They are all comfortable but not luxury. Please don't expect 5 star hotels. Please also be forewarned that Japanese hotel rooms can be quite tiny. Note that hotel options in Kurume and on Amami Island are limited; don't expect luxury or stylish interiors ☺

Starting point hotel in Kyoto: Resol Kawaramachi Sanjo
59-1 Daikoku-cho, Kawaramachi-dori Sanjo-sagaru, Nakagyo-ku,
Kyoto 604-8031
Tel:075-255-9269
Check in is from 3:00pm

Finishing point hotel in Osaka: Resol Trinity Osaka
2-6-6 Koraibashi, , Chuo-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka 541-0043
Tel: 06-6229-9269
Check out is by 11:00am

Coin laundry facilities are available at all our hotels. Several of the hotels have onsite onsens (hot springs bath).

On rare occasions, we may need to use alternative accommodation due to circumstances beyond our control. Alternative accommodation will be arranged at a similar standard.

Pre tour and post tour accommodation

The itinerary is a full one to ensure value for money; you may wish to consider booking additional days pre and/or post tour. If you wish to book a couple of days at our tour hotels in Kyoto or Osaka through us, we can assist with this, *subject to availability*. Simply make the request on the Travel Details Form. If our tour hotels have no availability we can book you at alternative accommodations.

International flights

Flights to and from Japan ARE NOT included in the trip price. Please don't book flights until you've received confirmation that you have a place on the tour, have paid your deposit and **received confirmation that we have our minimum tour group size and the trip is confirmed as proceeding**.

The itinerary *commences* in Kyoto and *concludes* in Osaka, so all flights can be booked to arrive and depart from Kansai (KIX) airport OR Itami (ITM) airport in Osaka.

Of course you may prefer to fly in and out of Tokyo. In this case you will need to make your own way to and from the starting and finishing point hotels.

When arranging your travel, please book a flight that allows you to attend the briefing meeting in Kyoto at 6:00pm on Day 1. Remember to allow enough time to collect luggage, clear passport control and then travel from Osaka to Kyoto (60-90 minutes) by train, Uber, or taxi. If you are not comfortable booking your own flights or buying travel insurance online, you may wish to consult a travel agent.

Transfers to/from airports

Airport arrival and departure transfers ARE NOT available for this tour. Options for getting to and from the airport to our Kyoto and Osaka hotels include taking the train or booking your own transfer. A couple of options are linked at the tour page for your convenience.

Transport

Train, bus, taxi, shinkansen (bullet train), private coach, two internal flights. See the packing list section on page 4 for luggage size restrictions for the internal flights.

Meals

While travelling with us you'll experience a vast array of traditional Japanese foods. Part of a Japan adventure is trying dango, mocha, raw fish sushi, yuba, eel and okonomiyaki, etc!

Many of the lunches and dinners are not included in the tour price, allowing for flexibility in budgets, however the group will often lunch together at cafes and restaurants selected by the guide for location and convenience, as the group moves from morning to afternoon activity.

Travellers with dietary requirements or food allergies are required to check with us at the time of applying. Unfortunately this tour is not suitable for vegans or coeliacs (a low gluten preference is manageable but unfortunately a strict medically required GF diet cannot be accommodated). The Japanese diet relies heavily on fish and fish products including dashi broth which is used in many many dishes. Vegetarians are requested to be flexible and be able to accept pescatarian options on tour.

While we endeavor to cater for dietary requirements where possible, we recommend that you carry extra snacks in case suitable options are limited. Please note that if you suffer from a particular allergy, it is your personal responsibility to ensure that you do not ingest any foods to which you are allergic.

Meals included: 14 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 4 dinners.

Water
Tap water in Japan is safe. Please carry your own refillable drink bottle with you each day and refrain from buying bottled water.

Safety
Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommended that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information prior to your departure. Our guides have the authority to amend or cancel any part of the itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt for the safekeeping of your money, passport and airline tickets. Please leave valuable jewellery at home. Some hotels do not have safety deposit boxes for storage of valuables. A lock for your suitcase is essential.

Depending on where you come from, traffic may be on the 'wrong' side of the road for you. Be alert, particularly when crossing roads.

While travelling there is always the risk of petty theft and pick-pocketing, particularly in touristy areas. Exercise caution when walking at night and take simple measures like carrying your pack on your front, and not hanging your bag over the back of your chair. Having said that, crime levels are low in Japan. Maintain the same vigilance you would at home and take sensible precautions.

Travel insurance
Travel insurance is not included in the trip price and is required on our tours. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, Covid-19 related scenarios as far as possible, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. You will not be able to join the tour until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number have been provided. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance as soon as you pay your deposit to ensure you are covered. Please be sure to carefully note the circumstances under which your chosen insurer will cover you for cancellation.

Passports and Visas
Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the duration of your trip and have at least one blank page. The name on your passport *must* match the name on your tour application form as we will be purchasing two domestic flight tickets on your behalf.

Money
The official currency of Japan is the Yen (JPY).

Download the XE currency exchange app to your smartphone for up to date currency exchange rates. As at October 2026:

JPY	AUD	USD	EURO
10.00 coin	0.09	0.06	0.06
50.00 coin	0.45	0.32	0.28
100 coin	0.91	0.63	0.55
500 coin	4.55	3.15	2.80
1000 note	9.10	6.34	5.65
2000 note	18.20	12.65	11.25
5000 note	45.50	31.65	28.15
10,000 note	91.00	63.30	56.30

Japan is predominantly a cash society and many small restaurants still operate in cash only. International debit and credit cards MasterCard and Visa can be used at major departments or large restaurants. Cash from non-Japanese bank accounts can be withdrawn at most convenience store ATMs, making it very easy to get access to cash throughout the trip, 24 hours a day. Remember to advise your bank of your travel dates so your card doesn't get cancelled the first time you use it overseas.

Spending money
Every traveller is different and spending money requirements will vary. Please consider your own spending habits when allowing for drinks, shopping, optional activities, gifts and souvenirs, and tipping. Note that the itinerary includes all breakfasts bar one, and several lunches and dinners – you will need to buy the remainder of the meals. We will find restaurants and food outlets to suit all budgets.

Tipping
Tipping is not customary in Japan in restaurants or for most other service providers. However if you are happy with our guide's services, a tip at the conclusion of the tour is appropriate. As a guideline, previous travellers elected to contribute an amount of 1000 yen per person per day.

Phone and internet
We require all our travellers to have internet access throughout the day (ie. not just at night at our hotels) to allow phone contact with the guide, host and fellow guests, and in case anyone gets separated from the group and requires assistance. We use a WhatsApp group for this purpose during the tour and to share messages and reminders of meeting times/places etc. You will be requested to join the WhatsApp app about a week prior to departure.

We recommend a couple of options for internet access:
1. Purchase an e-SIM, eg HolaFly or Airalo. If you opt for an Airalo e-SIM, feel free to use the code **SUSAN7066** for a small discount.
2. Purchase a global roaming package from your mobile/cell provider before you leave home.
3. Rent a 'pocket wifi' device – a quick google will show you several companies that offer this and you can arrange for the device to be delivered to your first hotel.

Note that if you need to download or update any smartphone apps for use in Japan, you should do so before you leave home as your local App Store doesn't always work in other countries.

Emergencies or other issues
While we endeavour to provide the best experience possible, due to the nature of travel, occasionally things go awry. Should any issue occur during the trip, please discuss this with your host and/or guide in the first instance so we can do our best to rectify the problem.

In the event of an emergency in Japan dial 119. Our tour operator's local emergency number will be provided to guests prior to the tour.

Emergency funds
Please make sure you have access to an additional $1000 for emergencies or in case unforeseen circumstances (eg natural disaster, civil unrest etc) necessitate a change to our route.

What to pack

A suggested **Packing List** is on the tour page. Generally speaking you should pack as lightly as possible as you will be expected to manage your own luggage. Please bring ONE modest sized suitcase or backpack. This itinerary includes two internal domestic JAL flights; JAL domestic baggage rules state that you may have one suitcase, maximum weight 20kg, its height must be no more than 120cm, width no more than 60cm and depth no more than 50cm. You may have one carry on item (eg small backpack or tote bag) and one personal item (eg. handbag/purse) in the cabin, totalling no more than 10kg.

You'll need a small daypack or tote bag to carry your daily needs including water bottle, medical kit, money etc for daily use, day trips, and most importantly, to function as an overnight bag as our luggage will be couriered ahead of us to Kurume.

Please ensure all luggage is lockable and clearly labelled ON THE OUTSIDE so we can see at a glance whose luggage is whose.

Responsible travel

retreat|recreate believes strongly in sustainable, responsible, low impact (or rather positive impact), travel. Broadly speaking this means we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local culture and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. We operate on the principle of respect for all people, cultures, religions and traditions in the countries to which we travel, and expect our travellers to extend the same respect.

Social responsibility - as a women's textile travel organisation, we strive to visit places where you can purchase handcrafts directly from the artisans themselves. We are also proud to support not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises and other associations that particularly assist women and girls. Where possible we seek out female artists and business operators.

Clothing – while some sections of Japanese society are known for their 'out there' fashions, in many ways it is quite a conservative country and as a general rule people dress modestly. Please remember we will spend time in rural towns, peoples' homes, and locations other than the sophisticated streets of Osaka and Kyoto. You may also visit temples and shrines in your free time – as a guide, consider how you would dress when entering a church, synagogue or mosque in your home country (ie. no plunging necklines, shorts or short hemlines). In Japan you will find you often need to remove your shoes when entering temples, homes and restaurants. Please ensure your socks are clean and hole-free!

Endangered species – it is against our responsible travel principles to take guests to places that supply or serve foods that are on the endangered species list, such as whale, turtle, tiger, birds nest, pangolin and shark. We do not visit any restaurants that serve endangered species.

Environment – our guests are asked to provide their own refillable water bottle rather than buying bottled water. (Tap water is safe to drink in Japan). We also encourage you to say no to plastic and will provide you with a reusable cloth shopping bag.

A couple of rules

Any illegal activity including the use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated. Possession or use of these substances is not only against the law but puts the rest of the group at risk. The host and guide have the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession. If you feel any member of the group is behaving inappropriately in this or any other way, please let us know.

Etiquette

Japan has a truly delightful culture of courtesy and you will find most people are unfailingly polite, helpful and courteous at all times. Bowing is not only a sign of respect but is frequently used in greetings and farewells. The most useful, and most oft-used Japanese word to learn is thank you – *arigatou*, or thank you very much – *arigatou gozaimasu*! Shoes are usually removed to enter homes, some temples, restaurants and some businesses. In public, blowing your nose, talking loudly, talking on a mobile phone and eating are all considered impolite. When using chopsticks, do not stand them upright in your bowl, but rest them horizontally. Slurping of green tea or noodles is encouraged as a sign of appreciation. See the Useful Information document for more info on etiquette.

Travelling on a group trip

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group – patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, please be on time and ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on everyone's part.



Bring a sense of humour and a sense of adventure!

We're going to have a wonderful trip ☺