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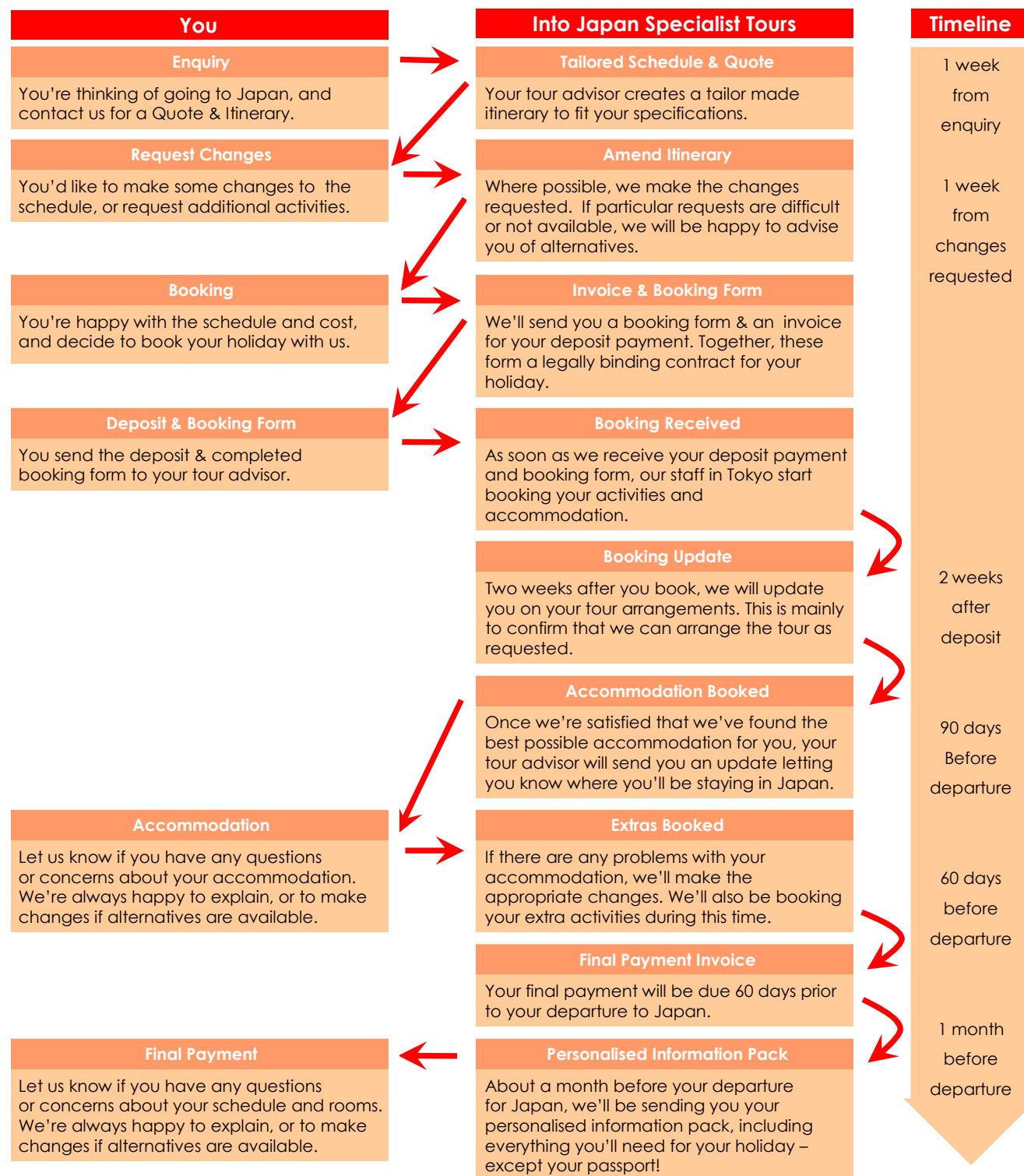
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About Visiting Japan gives you the information you'll want to know before you travel. We answer any questions you may have about what to pack and de-mystify Japanese food and bathrooms.



Into Japan Tailor Made Tour Service

Booking a holiday can be a confusing process – it's hard to know what to expect, as all agents and organisers work differently. We've outlined our process below, so you can know what to expect from the time you first get in touch with us to the time you leave for Japan.



The quote given is based on the information in the itinerary, and we will guarantee this price on that basis. When we receive your booking request – the deposit and booking form – we will start making these arrangements. If we are not able to provide the services as quoted, we will offer you an alternative quote as close to the original as possible. If you do not wish to accept the alternative we will be happy to make a full refund.

*Please note that exceptions may apply for late requests or peak seasons. In either of these cases you will be notified on your initial quote.

About Our Tour Quote



Our Service

Airport Meeting

In order to make the transition between the airport and your hotel as smooth as possible, you will be met at the arrivals gate of the airport by an English-speaking guide. You will then be assisted through the processes of converting your rail pass if necessary, changing money, and, if you wish, hiring a mobile phone for the duration of your stay. After these details have been taken care of, you will be escorted to your hotel where you will be assisted through the check-in process. For 3 and 4 star customers, transport to your hotel will be by airport train or the excellent Airport Limousine Coach service. For 5 and 5 plus star customers, a private car and driver will take you directly to your hotel.

This service and transfer is included in the cost of our tour for all our customers unless otherwise stated.

Orientation

The following morning, a member of our staff will meet you at your hotel to offer you an orientation session, going through the basics of your trip, before taking you out of your hotel to give you practical advice on using the metro, shopping at convenience stores, and ordering food. Our standard orientation session takes about 4 hours, and allows you to visit a major station to see where the bullet trains leave from, as well as booking your through tickets with our staff's help, if necessary. If there's time left over, our staff would be delighted to join you for lunch, and would be more than happy to start you out on your sightseeing with an insider's perspective –although please keep in mind that our staff members are not professional guides.

Please let us know if you would prefer a shorter orientation session – though you will still need at least an hour to cover the basics.

Guiding

If you have asked us for guides during the rest of your stay, they will be professional, registered local guides who can give you a detailed and informative tour of each area. Professional guiding must be booked in advance, and is included in your schedule assuming an eight hour day. If you would like your guide to stay with you longer, this will be charged at a reasonable, pro-rata rate.

Porters

Porterage is not included in your tour unless where a private guide and car are included. Porters are generally available at airports and many of the larger railway stations (excluding Tokyo Station), so please let us know if you would like porters available to help you with your luggage.

Telephone Support

Our 24 hour, free dial telephone support is intended to make your holiday as stress-free as possible. We operate a 24 hour emergency telephone service, in case anything goes wrong, and during office hours our staff are always happy to give advice or answer questions.

Transport

Rail Passes

Our quotes usually include Japan Rail Passes for 7, 14, or 21 days. We consider these to be the most economical, flexible and environmentally friendly way to travel in Japan, as they allow you unlimited access on all Japan Rail trains across the country, including *shinkansen* bullet trains (except the fastest, Nozomi), during the time period. Prior to your departure, we will provide you with a Japan Rail Pass Exchange Order, which will be changed to a Japan Rail Pass upon your arrival in Japan. Your onward tickets will also be booked at this time or during your orientation session. If you are using a rail pass it is not possible to book train tickets before arriving in Japan. If you would prefer us to book your rail tickets prior to your arrival in Japan, please let us know and we will be able to re-quote your trip with the individual train journeys required.

Car Rental

For self-driving car rental, an international driver's licence is essential. In the UK, this can be obtained through the AA or at your local post office.



The Information Pack



Into Japan tour details

John & Julie Tailor
August 2nd - August 23rd 2008



What is it and what's included?

About one month before you depart for Japan, you'll receive your Information Pack from us. This will include a variety of information designed to allow you to set off knowing exactly what's happening and when, as well as furnishing you with a host of information that will be useful during your trip.

Detailed Itinerary

A detailed, day by day itinerary, letting you know not only where you're staying and when and what your daily plans will be but also giving extra information and details about the places you'll be visiting and what to expect.



Hotel Information

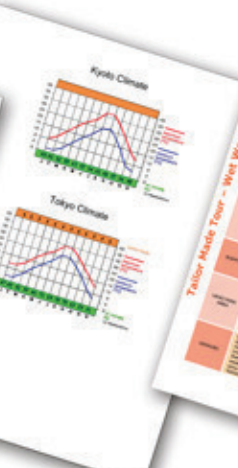
In addition to a cover sheet detailing all of the hotels or ryokan you'll be staying at along the way, you'll also receive an information sheet on each of them, giving you a guide to the places you'll be staying as well as maps and other useful information.



Detailed Timetable

Full timetable for the journeys you'll be making so you never need worry about missing a connection!

What else is included in the Pack?



General Tour Information

Telephone Support Details

Climate Graphs

Wet Weather Guide

A Guide to Our Hotel Star Ratings



Hotels in Japan range from simple and efficient business hotels to the luxurious accommodation found only in Tokyo – ryokan still fill the luxury niche in many locations.

Japanese accommodation is known for service at any level and even in smaller establishments in the 3 star category, staff will be polite, knowledgeable and friendly, while at the higher end the service often exceeds the highest expectations.

Rooms at all levels are generally spotlessly clean and breakfasts are very good quality - though a Japanese "Western" breakfast will vary from the traditional, with salads being a very common addition, along with eggs, meats, toasts, rolls, yoghurt and fruit. Japanese breakfasts are also often available.

Traditionally, Japanese couples sleep next to each other on futons and though hotels provide beds, the prevalence of twin rooms, often with two single sized beds, still reflects this. Wherever possible, we will accommodate requests for double beds, though outside the larger cities twin rooms remain standard up to the 4 Star level.

Top end hotels are somewhat limited outside major cities, with 5 Star + really only available in Tokyo - though luxury ryokan are available throughout the country

If you have chosen a programme based on a price for a hotel category, please note that this is an average and the standards are likely to be higher in the bigger cities than elsewhere, as options may be limited in more rural areas

Rating	Example	General	Rooms	Room Size
3 Star	Washington Hotels	Usually small with a simple reception area and limited facilities in the hotel.	Basic but clean and always ensuite, normally with a small unit bathroom including shower over a bath. These hotels always have a TV, phone, A/C, hair dryer, basic toiletries and plate for heating water, as well as usually having a fridge in the room and vending machines for alcoholic and soft drinks.	15 sqm approx.
4 Star	Park Hotel Tokyo	Large hotels providing reasonable facilities such as restaurants, bars and porter service.	Comfortable with a comfortable bathroom ensuite and toiletries provided. In addition to the facilities above, satellite TV, night robe and internet connections are normally available.	20-25 sqm approx.
5 Star	Granvia Hotel Kyoto	Usually large hotels with full facilities including gym, restaurants and bars etc., and often a swimming pool.	Very comfortable with all normal services and facilities that can be expected in international hotels. This includes room service, shiatsu massage, minibar and other extras.	25-35 sqm approx.
5 Star Plus	Conrad Hotel Tokyo	These famous hotels are often the best in Japan, equivalent to the Ritz or Savoy in London. The lobbies are usually spectacular in appearance and design.	Deluxe rooms with all the extras to be expected from a world-class hotel, including small free gifts. Large marble bathroom usually with separate shower and bath.	35-50 sqm approx.



A Guide to Our Ryokan Star Ratings



Ryokan, traditional Japanese inns, range from simple, modest lodgings, through rambling wooden inns reminiscent of times past, to sleek modern resorts designed by top firms and providing every indulgence.

At any level, ryokan offer an exceptional dining experience, with *kaiseki* dinners and traditional Japanese breakfasts served at a low table in your room. Rooms are in the traditional Japanese style, emphasising clean lines and a sense of space. There tend to be few furnishings and soft Japanese futon mattresses are spread out on the *tatami* floor in place of beds. All ryokan offer communal *onsen* baths, often in stunning outdoor settings and all rooms booked in the star categories below will include en suite facilities.

In terms of facilities and services, ryokan offer something quite different from hotels in the same level. Where hotels will offer twenty-four hour room service, mini bars, swimming pools and concierge service, ryokan offer traditional Japanese service that will not generally include the above. Instead, the focus is on the food, the rooms, the baths and the atmosphere. As ryokan tend to cater to Japanese guests, English is not always spoken, even in the higher star ratings, though staff will always do their utmost to communicate with you.

☞ Please note that some of Japan's best ryokan fall outside of our 5+ category and will require a supplement.

Rating	Example	General	Rooms	Cuisine
3 Star	Shirayu no Yado Yamadaya 白湯の宿 山田家	These ryokan may not be much to look at from the outside, but the clean, simple interiors are comfortable and well-maintained. Indoor and outdoor communal public baths are provided.	Simple, clean <i>tatami</i> rooms with touches of refinement, such as fresh flowers and tea-making facilities. Futon mattresses are laid out by staff before dinner. As in all our ryokan categories, <i>yukata</i> (kimono-style robes) are provided, as are towels and hair dryers and other toilet amenities. These rooms will have a private toilet and sink area ensuite to the room.	High quality, multi-course <i>kaiseki</i> dinners, often incorporating local specialties and seasonal ingredients.
4 Star	Yoshiike Ryokan 吉池	Generally larger ryokan, with more impressive lobbies and occasionally separate dining areas. In addition to ensuite rooms, private baths are generally available for those seeking some privacy from the communal <i>onsen</i> .	Larger, increasingly ornate <i>tatami</i> rooms often with flat-screen televisions and tea-making facilities. Ryokan in this category may offer rooms with Western-style twin beds. In general, however, futon mattresses are laid out on the <i>tatami</i> after dinner and folded up again by staff before breakfast.	As above with an increased emphasis on quality and presentation.
5 Star	Senkei Annex Yamagaso 離れ 山家荘	The exteriors of these lovely ryokan vary greatly, ranging from traditional wood to ultra-modern. Interiors are beautifully decorated, with great attention to detail and the communal <i>onsen</i> are luxurious and peaceful.	Comfortable and spacious, these rooms unite the traditional with modern touches. Some ryokan may offer Western-style beds in fusion rooms. Large windows open onto garden views or distant mountains. Ensuite baths are luxurious, with marble, stone, or fragrant cypress tubs.	Excellent <i>kaiseki</i> cuisine, focusing on high-quality and often local seasonal ingredients, served in elegant handmade dishes.
5 Star Plus	Hakone Ginyu 箱根吟遊	Often newly renovated, these designer ryokan have been run by the same family for generations, and excel at service. Spa treatments are available and the communal <i>onsen</i> are large, beautifully designed havens with garden or mountain views.	The epitome of indulgence, these large rooms have outdoor <i>onsen</i> in the room's private balcony or garden. Fusion-style rooms with double beds are often available. Suite-type rooms, with separate dining areas are standard. Rooms will often contain beautiful examples of traditional scrolls and flower arrangements.	Elaborate, innovative <i>kaiseki</i> that occasionally leans towards fusion and rival those in top restaurants, served in ceramic dishes made by renowned artists.

About Visiting Japan

Visas

British and American nationals do not require a visa and will normally receive a 90 day permit on entry. For other nationalities, please check with your local Japanese embassy.

Health Advice

There are no particular health or immunisation requirements for travel to Japan. It is worth noting that the flight is quite long – about 12 hours. Our tours are intended to be relaxing and enjoyable and we usually assume people prefer free time in the evening.

Meals

There is a huge variety of food available in Japan including European and other world cuisines. Most visitors enjoy traditional Japanese food, though larger towns and cities will have European, American or Asian restaurants if you prefer something more familiar for a change.

Food is very good value in Japan, despite what you may have heard! You can easily find good quality lunches for £5 and dinner for just £10. Dining in hotels or more exclusive restaurants can be much more expensive, but in general you will get much better quality for your money than in the UK.

Restaurants generally open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for lunch, and again from 5 p.m. onwards for dinner. Although many formal restaurants close relatively early in the evening, ramen shops and *izakaya* pubs are usually open until midnight, if not considerably later.

If you have any particular dietary concerns, please let us know on booking – we do our utmost to accommodate special diets, but it takes extra planning!

We have included a brief guide to some of the most popular Japanese dishes.

Luggage

It is popular in Japan to pay to have your luggage couriered between locations on a next day service. You will be able to arrange this at your hotel. There may also be a same day service between some locations. Carrying large luggage on trains can be difficult where storage space and lift access is limited. Although not essential, if you decide to courier your luggage, we suggest you ask the hotel to forward your larger luggage and take a portable overnight bag for the first night at each location.

Lockers are available at most railway stations, however these often fill up early, particularly on holidays, so are not a reliable option. Your hotel will be happy to store your luggage for you for some hours before or after check in or out.

Popular Japanese dishes

Sukiyaki is a fondue-style dish, prepared at your table in a bubbling pot by cooking thinly sliced beef with vegetables, tofu and noodles in a soy-based sauce.



Tempura is fish, seafood & vegetables coated in a very light and crisp batter, deep fried in vegetable oil.



Sushi is exquisitely prepared fish or seafood -- often raw -- placed on a bed of specially seasoned Japanese rice. A few non-seafood options are usually available.



Sashimi is extremely fresh, delicately sliced fish and other seafood eaten raw with soy sauce and fiery wasabi, or sometimes ginger.



Kaiseki Ryori is Japan's haute cuisine. Often served in stages like a tasting menu, dishes mostly comprise fish, vegetable, seaweed and mushroom flavours and the presentation is a work of art.



Yakitori is small pieces of seasoned chicken or other meat and vegetables, cooked on skewers over a charcoal grill, and seasoned with salt or a sweet-salty sauce.



Tonkatsu is a crispy crumbed pork cutlet, fried and usually served with a distinctive, fragrant sauce and salad.



Shabu-shabu is another fondue-style dish -- using your chopsticks, fine slices of beef and vegetables are swirled in a pot of bubbling water, then dipped in a special sauce.



Soba and Udon are two popular Japanese noodles. Soba is made primarily from buckwheat flour and udon from wheat flour. They are served either in a soup or with a sauce and are available in numerous delicious variations.



Climate and clothing

Though temperatures and seasons vary throughout the Japanese archipelago, summers in tend to be hot and humid, and winters are generally cold and clear, with snow throughout much of the country. Between these two extremes are the warm days and cool nights that mark spring and autumn. Although spring and autumn bring some wet weather days, the real rainy season falls in early June in the southern regions of Japan, and moves into the northern areas in early July.

In the early stages of planning your itinerary, we may have mentioned any particular climate considerations. Please ask us if you are unsure.

You do not necessarily need formal clothes and it is perfectly acceptable to wear comfortable, casual clothes. There are no religious or cultural taboos regarding dress although people tend to be slightly smarter and more fashion conscious than the average British person. A light raincoat or fold-up umbrella is a sensible addition to your day-bag. All such clothing and equipment can be bought easily and cheaply in Japan, although the sizes are smaller, and have a different cut. Larger western sizes can be quite rare.

Electrical Appliances

Japan has 100v current and plugs have 2 flat pins. You will need a transformer to use overseas appliances safely. UK mobile phones cannot usually be used in Japan. Please check with your phone company. Mobile phone rental can be easily arranged at both Narita and Kansai airports, and can be returned at either location at the end of your holiday.

Bathing and Bathrooms

Japanese hi-tech bathrooms are slightly different to British versions and sometimes include reheating baths, digital temperature control pads, electronic bidet and heated loo seats! Traditional Japanese WCs are also somewhat different but there is usually a combination of Japanese and British styles in most places.

In general, bathing is very thorough, typically including a vigorous shower before stepping into a hot bath. Baths are sometimes shorter but much deeper and very relaxing. In addition to standard facilities, some hotels and most ryokan offer traditional single sex communal bathing in large hot pools – an experience not to be missed once you've overcome initial modesty!

Tsukiji Fish Market

The situation at Tsukiji fish market is constantly changing. The famous tuna auctions are currently allowing well behaved visitors in groups of 5 or fewer, please be aware that access may be limited. The outer market however readily welcomes visitors. There is a remote possibility that the market or auctions may completely closed to tourists at some point in the future. You will be informed of the current situation during your orientation session.

