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itinerary for

**JAPAN PRIVATE LUXURY TOUR 2010-2011 (IDEAL FOR SAKURA/APRIL CHERRY BLOSSOMS)
TOKYO – KYOTO/NARA – HAKONE 8 DAYS**

DAY 1: ARRIVE NARITA – TOKYO 2 nights – Tokyo (Peninsula)

DAY 3: TRAIN TOKYO – KYOTO 3 nights – Kyoto (Hirragiya or Tawaraya and Hyatt Regency Kyoto)

DAY 6: TRAIN KYOTO – HAKONE 2 nights – Hakone (Gora Kadan)

DAY 8: TRAIN HAKONE – TOKYO/NARITA – DEPART TOKYO – U.S.

DAY 1: DEPARTURE

Upon arrival at Tokyo Narita International Airport you will be met and privately transferred to the Peninsula Tokyo Hotel.

Meals: None

*Accommodation: 2 Nights at the Peninsula Tokyo Hotel/
Grand Deluxe Room*

DAY 2: TOKYO

Half-day private touring of Tokyo to visit:

Meiji Jingu Shrine

Omotesando & Harajuku Area

Asakusa Kannon Temple

Nakamise Shopping Arcade

Meiji Shrine

Meiji is one of our favorite shrines in all of Tokyo. In the midst of all the noise and complexities of the Tokyo metropolis, Meiji gives one a quiet, stoic oasis for rest and reflection. Once past the torii (gate) at the entrance, one can savor the quiet natural smells and lush greenery of the 120,000 evergreen trees and forest that cover the expansive 175 acres.

Based on Shinto tradition, be sure to write your prayers on the wooden blocks just outside the shrine. – R.L.

Akihabara District of Tokyo

The renaissance of Akiba, as it is affectionately known, has taken place over the past few years, thanks to a steady stream of new developments and infrastructure improvements. Two years ago, the Tsukuba Express train line opened a station in Akihabara, linking the electronics town to Tsukuba, the scientific

research hub of Japan located in Ibaraki prefecture, northeast of Tokyo. But the main attraction for most visitors is the gleaming, massive **Yodobashi Camera Multimedia Akiba, which has the honor of being the country's largest electronics store.** The shop has a dizzying array of products on nine floors, spread out over 23,000 sq m of floor space. One could easily spend an entire day browsing, provided the blinking lights and the store's theme song, which loops endlessly (in tune to "The battle Hymn of the Republic") does not cause vertigo.

The **influence of Japanese pop culture has spread its tentacles throughout Akihabara**, with most electronics shops now offering manga, figurines and game software, along with the standard assortment of hardware. At weekends, the main street is closed to traffic, and teenagers and young adults gleefully roam the streets in costumes mimicking characters from their favorite manga, otherwise known as "cosplay" in Japan.

"Maid Cafes"

Another curious development here is the steady proliferation of "**maid cafes**" in Akihabara. Young women dress up in French maid costumes and load heaps of lavish attention upon customers, who are primarily male. Yet most devotees of the maid café culture insist that there is nothing overtly sexual about the genre.

"It's something that is probably very difficult to understand for a foreigner, but young women just want to look kawaii (cute) and sometimes take on different persona," mentioned a maid café proprietress. "I only advertised for employees on the internet before I actually opened the shop, and the sheer volume of responses was overwhelming. "This place is a town for hobbyists – you can buy figurines, cameras, go to maid cafes, do anything you want," says



Hideya Yanagihara, the editor-in-chief of the online Akiba Economic Newspaper. “Akiba represents a collision between the virtual and real worlds. Anything is accepted here.”

Harajuku Area

Harajuku refers to the area from Meiji Shrine to Omote Sandô, extending to Aoyama Avenue. The focal point of Harajuku’s teenage culture is Takeshita Dori (Takeshita Street) and its side streets, which are lined by a vast number of trendy shops, fashion boutiques, used clothes stores, crepe stands and fast food outlets geared towards the fashion and trend conscious teens. Harajuku however, offers something for people of all ages, including shops, cafes and restaurants along Omotesando, a broad, tree lined avenue, sometimes referred to as Tokyo’s Champs-Elysees. Omoto Sando Hills, a recently opened shopping complex along the avenue has become one of the most popular. – RL

Meals: None

Accommodation: Peninsula Tokyo Hotel/Grand Deluxe Room

DAY 3: TOKYO –KYOTO

Transfer to Tokyo Station.

Depart Tokyo for Kyoto via JR Shinkansen Nozomi F-class Green Car Bullet Train, leaving Tokyo at 11:50am, arriving Kyoto at 2:11pm.

Note: Please be reminded that there is no porter service available in railway stations throughout Japan. We may have your main luggage transferred by truck service from Tokyo to Kyoto. In this case, you would only need an overnight bag to bring on the Bullet Train to Kyoto. Your main luggage would be transferred directly to the Hyatt Regency Kyoto, while your overnight bag would be used for your night at Hiiragiya ryokan.

Built by Koito Manufacturing, the new First Class (Green Car) seats feature leg heaters, LED reading lights and an improved ergonomic shape. This is a wonderful environmentally progressive, high-tech rail experience.

***Ekiben**, short for ekibento (“**station lunchbox**”) is the array of diverse, regional Japanese delicacies that one eats on the Japan bullet train transport system. These tasty, high-quality lunchbox specialties can be purchased at all of the main railway stations, as well as on the bullet train itself (though less variety). Ekiben has achieved almost cult status in Japan, where you can taste the varying specialties of different regions of the country, depending on the bullet train route you are using. –RL*

Upon arrival, private transfer from Kyoto Station to Hiiragiya Ryokan

Hiiragiya Ryokan

Similar to Tawaraya Ryokan (just across the alley-way), Hiiragiya is considered among the most note-worthy and famous ryokans in all of Japan. Improbably, two of the most famous luxury ryokans in all of Japan stand directly across from each other! A stay at Hiiragiya or Tawaraya represents a complete immersion into traditional Japanese culture. Enclosed in a traditional sukiya style wooden structure, Hiiragiya was conceived in 1818 when Hiiragiya, a seafood dealer, began providing accommodation to traveling merchants. Later, Hiiragiya welcomed many members of the imperial family including writers/governing officials/international celebrities. *We give an A+ to both the Tawaraya and Hiiragiya, although we feel Hiiragiya is perhaps more accommodating and open to Western eccentricities. – RL*

Kaiseki dinner with private geisha entertainment



Special private geisha entertainment will be arranged in your room for you while enjoying your kaiseki dinner. This unique geisha night will include one geiko (the term used for geisha in Kyoto), one maiko (a younger, apprentice geiko) and one jikata (an older geiko singing and playing musical instruments). A

quick way to tell the difference between a geiko and maiko is that the older geiko wears a white neck collar. This will be among the most unique experiences of your trip, a wonderful metaphor of Japan’s unique Shinto/Buddhist based culture. *Please note that your Kyoto guide will join you in order to better communicate with the geiko and maiko. – RL*

Kaiseki represents the highest level of Japanese haute cuisine, a multi-course dining experience where the presentation, setting, and collection of foods can only be described as uniquely Japanese. Originally conceived as part of the tea ceremony, each kaiseki portion is relatively small, unique unto itself. Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten described, “kaiseki, is like a beautiful dance building up to a crescendo. There’s nothing else that comes close – the poetry, the aesthetics, and attention to every detail.” Kaiseki has become the new buzz word among the international culinary elite. You will be served a kaiseki dinner each of your three nights at Yoshikawa.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hiiragiya Ryokan/Japanese Tatami Room –or– Tawaraya Ryokan

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DAY 4: KYOTO – NARA

Breakfast at the hotel

Full day tour of Kyoto & Nara by a private vehicle with an English speaking guide.

Among our favorite temple/shrine options:

Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion)



A Zen temple, is one of the most beautiful temples in all of Kyoto. Dating back to 1397 as a new residence for the retired shogun Ashikaga Yushimitsu, the pavilion was burned down in 1950 by a fanatic monk. The present temple structure dates from the reconstruction of 1955, which was rebuilt

true to the original—the exception is that both upper stories are covered in gold leaf, in accordance with Ashikaga’s original intentions. However, in 1987 the temple was recovered in gold leaf five times thicker than the original coating! With the thick, very shiny gold leaf, Kinkakuji seems almost surreal.

Kiyomizu-dera (“Pure Water Temple”)



Is a UNESCO world heritage site and is most impressive. Founded in 780 by the Hosso Japanese Buddhist sect, we particularly enjoy the famous wooden terrace overlooking Kyoto and the busy, interesting approach (although steep!) to the temple with all sorts of shops and small eateries.

Do not miss **Jishu Shrine**, dedicated to the deity of love—walk the two rocks in front of the shrine with your eyes closed to bring luck in your love life!

Heian Jingu Shrine



Heian Shrine was built relatively recently in 1895 on the occasion of the 1,100th anniversary of the Heian Capital foundation. It is dedicated to the first and last emperors that

reigned from Kyoto, Emperor Kammu and Emperor Komei.

The shrine buildings are a partial replica of the Imperial Palace of the Heian Period, but only about two thirds of the original buildings in scale. Several events are held on the shrine’s spacious inner court occasionally.

A nice garden is located behind the shrine’s main buildings. A visit is most beautiful in April, when the garden’s many weeping cherry trees are in full bloom. An admission fee applies only to visiting the garden.

Fushimi Shrine



Fushimi is perhaps our favorite shrine in Japan, the Fushimi Inari Taisha! (Fushimi is featured in the beginning of the film, “Memoirs of Geisha”) Dating back to the 8th century, the shrine includes a wan-

dering pathway around 3 miles up the mountain lined with hundreds of beautiful red torii, now faded to look orange. Fushimi is the most famous of several thousand shrines dedicated to **Inari** across Japan. **Inari is the Shinto god of rice, and foxes are believed to be his messengers**, hence the many fox statues found along the pathway.

Depending on how high you walk along the pathway, this can be a half-day trek. Much less crowded than the other shrines, Fushimi’s natural surroundings seem serene and mystical. Walking up the pathway late in the afternoon or early morning are ideal times to visit this wonderful place. Bev, Zen, and I very much enjoy the eerie, magical ambience of Fushimi.

Kitsune Udon (“Fox Udon”)

A noodle soup topped with pieces of fried tofu, a **favorite food of foxes**, is served at small restaurants along the Fushimi hiking trail.

Todaiji (“Great Eastern Temple”) and Nara Deer Park



These are both well worth the one and a half hour drive from Kyoto. Todaiji, was constructed in 752 as the head temple of all Japan provincial Buddhist temples. Todaiji contains **Japan’s largest Buddhist statue** and all represents the world’s **largest wooden building**.

Nara Park, adjacent to Todaiji, is a large beautiful park noted for **hundreds of freely roaming deer**. The deer are considered messengers of the Shinto gods and a national treasure of Nara. Nara is the capital city of Nara Prefecture in the Kansai region of Japan. Nara was the capital of Japan from 710 to 784, lending its name to the Nara period. The original city, Heijo-kyo, was modeled after the capital of Tang Dynasty China, Chang’an (present-day Xi’an—hence the Chinese influence in the temples).

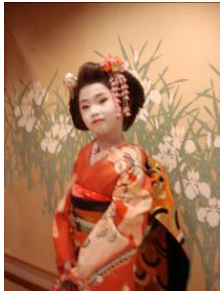
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The temples of Nara remained powerful even beyond the move of the political capital to Heian-kyo in 794, thus giving Nara a synonym of Nanto (lit. meaning “South Capital”) as opposed to Heian-kyo, situated in the North.

Nara is considered the second most important ancient city in all of Japan after Kyoto. **Nara has five sites listed on the UNESCO World heritage list, including the oldest wooden structure in the world (Horyuji Temple).**

Optional “geisha dress-up” for young girls. Taking approx. two hours, this is an amazing experience for those of you with young daughters.



Zen Lynch dressed as an authentic Japanese Maiko

Meals: Breakfast

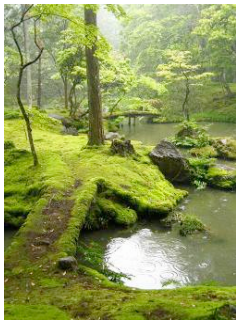
Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto/ Deluxe Balcony King

DAY 5: KYOTO

Breakfast at hotel

Independent, discretionary private touring. (We will provide a list of interesting shops!)

Saihoji Gardens – restricted visitation



Based on prior appointment, you are permitted to enter Saihoji only by attending a special ceremony in the temple, a compelling (challenging) experience as you are asked to copy part of a sacred Buddhist text, using ink and a brush. This is a beautiful, lush, moss-covered series of gardens set in a landscape of islands, inlets, linked by small bridges made from moss-covered

logs – an other-worldly experience and our favorite gardens in all of Kyoto. – RL

Optional Private Tea Ceremony/Instruction (approx. one hour)

PHILOSOPHER’S WALK

Kyoto’s “Philosopher’s Walk” is the name given to a 2km long path that runs through northeastern Kyoto. Kyoto’s Philosopher’s Walk is a path along which a philosophy professor, Kitaro Nishida, used to frequently walk. This wonderfully relaxing walk covers five temples and two shrines, paralleling a beautiful canal/stream. I recommend this walk in the early morning, thus avoiding the tourists that come later in the day.

GION

Made up mostly of plain wooden structures located on the eastern side of the Kamo River, you will see no glitz or neon lights here. Gion is a wonderful throw-back to traditional Japanese culture, home to Kyoto’s most famous geisha district, illuminated at night with lanterns and subtle lighting. The Gion District is featured in the 2006 “Memoirs of a Geisha,” and it is still a good place to get a glimpse of these extraordinary specialists. Around 5-6 pm is said to be the peak hour and the best spot is the Ichiriki Ochaya teahouse on the corner of Hanami-koji and Shijo. Another likely spot is Gion Corner. Gion is a wonderful place for evening strolls and people-watching with very delicious restaurants!

SHIRAKAWA MINAM-DORI STREET IN GION

We feel this street is among the most beautiful in Kyoto (Gion), running alongside the narrow Shirakawa river (canal). You will see wonderfully preserved wooden structures including various restaurants and ryokans. Also, unlike much of Kyoto, Shirakawa Dori is free of telephone poles and overhead wires, which makes for an amazing, natural aesthetic. The street is lined with willow trees, which are allowed to grow out. We have been told that this is unusual in Kyoto as most trees planted along the streets are pruned back at least twice a year.

MARUYAMA PARK

Though it’s mobbed by tourist during cherry blossom season (like when we are there!), Maruyama Park in Gion is a tranquil spot the rest of the year. Start at the vivid white-and-orange Yasaka Shrine, where locals pray to the god of prosperity and health, and then wend your way through the park past ponds, gardens and a gigantic weeping cherry. Be sure to walk through the eerie hillside cemetery, its terraced maze of gravestones resembling a miniature city. You will love the views here!

PONTOCHO

Pontocho is a Kyoto district also known for geisha houses and traditional tea houses. Like Gion, Pontocho is famous for the preservation of forms of traditional architecture and entertainment.

Pontocho centers around one long, narrow, cobbled alley running from Shijodori to Sanjodori, one block west of the Kamo River (Kamogawa). This is also the traditional location of the start of kabuki, and a statue of Okuni still stands on the opposite side of the river.

Geisha have existed in Pontocho since at least the 1500s.

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Today, the area, lit by traditional lanterns at night, contains a mix of very expensive restaurants - often featuring outdoor riverside dining on wooden patios - geisha houses and tea houses, brothels, bars and cheap eateries.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency Kyoto/Deluxe Balcony King

DAY 6: KYOTO & HAKONE

Breakfast at hotel

Private transfer from Tawaraya to Kyoto Station.

Depart Kyoto for Odawara via JR Shinkansen Hikari F-Class Bullet Train, leaving Kyoto at 12:30pm, arriving Odawara at 2:35pm.

Upon arrival, meet and private transfer from Odawara Station to Gora Kadan.

Gora Kadan is a superb ryokan (traditional inn) that has managed to compromise gracefully with the modern Western world. Proprietress Mikawako, the third generation of Fujimotos to run Gora Kadan, has blended traditional Japanese ryokan hospitality with modern Western design in creating a luxurious ryokan spa experience. The Gora Kadan's original building dates back 300 years and was the summer home of the Kan'in-No-Miya imperial family. With its airy east-west fusion aesthetic, its wonderful (Kaiseki) food service, and total relaxation spa, Gora Kadan is definitely on our A-list for high-touch ryokans in Japan! – RL

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: 2 Nights at Gora Kadan/Aoi Suite with private onsen

DAY 7: HAKONE

Breakfast at hotel

Half-day (10:00am-2:00pm) use of private guide and driver to visit Lake Ashi Excursion Boat & Owakudani Valley.

Remainder of day at leisure

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Gora Kadan/Aoi Suite with private onsen

DAY 8: TOKYO

Breakfast at the hotel

Private transfer from Gora Kadan to Odawara Station.

Depart Odawara via JR Shinkansen Hikari or Kodama and connecting to JR Express F Class NEX Train to Narita International Airport for your departure flight back to the U.S.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: None

— BON VOYAGE —



For more information or to book your customized journey, please contact:

KIPLING & CLARK

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OUR 15 FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT JAPAN! (RANDY, BEV, AND ZEN LYNCH) WINTER 2010

1. CLEANLINESS

Japan's Shinto-esque identity has made the Japanese perhaps the cleanest people on earth. Regardless of where you travel in Japan, the natives are well-groomed, neat, and spotlessly clean. This extends to streets, homes, office buildings, wherever!

2. GEISHA CULTURE

A private geisha dinner with a Geiko (geisha in Kyoto), Maiko (apprentice geiko) and Jikatu (instrument-playing geiko), is an otherworldly experience. While being served a scrumptious multi-course kaiseki dinner, you are serenaded with traditional Japanese song and dance. Separately, Zen feels her geisha "makeover" is among her most "awesome" experiences in Japan.

3. JAPAN'S RAILWAY SYSTEM

Similar to so much of Japan, its railway/shinkansen (bullet) transport system is meticulously efficient, immaculately clean, very fast, and completely reliable. If only we had shinkansen in the states! We particularly love the First Class N700 Green Cars - ergonomic seating with an unbelievably smooth ride!

4. JAPAN'S BATHROOM CULTURE

Toto's automated toilets/washlets make Japan's bathroom culture most unique, perhaps a further expression of Shinto cleanliness/hygiene. These toilets are amazing - all-spraying, all deodorizing, with oscillating heated massage! Bev, Zen and I agree that the Toto washlet is a fun, hands-free, spa-like bathroom experience. This is another bonus for staying at the Peninsula!

5. SUMO WRESTLING

If you are unable to make one of the bimonthly Sumo wrestling tournaments, a private morning Sumo wrestling practice session is the next best thing - followed by a Chanko breakfast with the wrestlers!

6. WABI-SABI AESTHETIC

The Japanese worldview/state of mind emphasizing simplicity and purity - the beauty and awe of all things humble, imperfect, unpretentious.

7. ANIME (AND MANGA)

Bev, Zen and I are all big anime (Japanese animated film) fans, particularly as manifested in the Ghibli Museum, west of Tokyo in Mitaka. Ghibli features the work of Academy award-winning filmmaker, Hayao Miyazaki ("Spirited Away"). Ghibli is a kid's animation wonderland!

8. ONSEN (NATURAL HOT SPRINGS)

Whether indoors or outdoors, Japan's ubiquitous hot springs are a national treasure - relaxing, therapeutic, cathartic. Gora Kadan in Hakone our favorite!

9. SHINTO SHRINES/BUDDHIST TEMPLES

Fushimi-inari (our favorite!) and Heian Jingju in Kyoto, and Meiji in Tokyo; Kiyomizudera ("Pure Water Temple"), Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Nazenji (Zen's favorite) in Kyoto, and, of course, Todaiji in Nara.

10. HIGH-TOUCH (LUXURY) RYOKANS

Amazingly, two of the most famous ryokans (Japanese inns) in Kyoto are located directly across the alleyway from each other. It's difficult to distinguish Tawarayama from Hiiragiya - they both represent the very highest levels of high-touch service. Both ryokans successfully integrate the finest Japanese traditions and wabi-sabi philosophy with contemporary conveniences that seasoned travelers expect.

11. JAPANESE (MATCHA) GREEN TEA

The highest quality of all green teas, matcha (MA-cha) is a fine, powdered Japanese green tea, originally conceived by Chan Buddhists in China. Matcha is an integral part of the Japanese tea ceremony and a very special treat when visiting Japan. All hail matcha!

12. JAPANESE FOOD, IN ALL OF ITS VARIETY!

Sushi, tempura, robata, soba, kaiseki dinners.

13. JAPAN'S VENDING MACHINE CRAZE

Japan is the vending machine epicenter of the world - clean, reliable and pervasive throughout the country. You can get just about anything in Japan's vending machines: food (including hot ramen), alcohol, soft drinks, even fresh eggs, umbrellas and lingerie!

14. WHITE-GLOVED TAXI SERVICE

We always look forward to experiencing Japan's meticulously clean and efficient taxi service, particularly the drivers' clean, white gloves and white lace seat covers.

15. JAPANESE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL

Enthusiastic, yet perfectly choreographed participation by the fans, attending a professional Japanese baseball game makes one feel American-style baseball is comparatively uneventful. Coordinated cheering and towel waving, deafening roar of the crowds, and, of course, the ubiquitous stadium "beer girls" make baseball in Japan so much fun!



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