

retreat | recreate
Japan Textiles & Handcrafts Tour 10 – 24 May 2027
Trip Notes (as at October 2025)

Konnichiwa!

Welcome to our Japan Textiles & Handcrafts Tour for 2027. 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 silver skyscrapers of Tokyo are one side of the story; but look carefully and you'll find pockets of tranquil beauty unlike anything else in Asia – the scent of delicate green tea, the beauty of an ancient garden or the fleeting glimpse of a geisha. The textiles and handcrafts of Japan encompass the country's deep respect for cultural tradition, meditation, history and beauty. We hope you enjoy our exploration of Japan, its textile and handcraft traditions and culture. These Trip Notes function as a kind of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) and an adjunct to the itinerary.

Tour Dates

10 – 24 May 2027

This trip will be fully escorted by our accredited English-speaking Japanese guide only. There will not be a retreat|recreate host accompanying this trip.

Itinerary

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 depending on the planned exhibitions at various galleries/museums as they are confirmed closer to departure, or if any of our workshop hosts need to change days or dates. We'll always let you know of any proposed changes.

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 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. Please note that the guide will need to remain with the group. Of course, we hope and expect that you'll enjoy and participate in our itinerary. We've researched and sourced some fabulous textile and handcraft workshops and studio visits, and lined up visits to our favourite craft museums and galleries. Plus we'll take in some of Japan's most important temples and shrines, stroll gardens of breathtaking beauty, enjoy sensational food and a traditional tea ceremony, and soak up the Japanese culture.

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 handcraft traditions. You don't need to be an accomplished or experienced textile 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 need to be in excellent physical health to participate fully on this trip and must be able to:

- Sit on the floor for extended periods of time to participate in workshops, studio talks, tea ceremony and some meals
- Sleep on futon mattresses on the floor at a Japanese style hotel
- Navigate airports and train stations without personal assistance
- Manage their own luggage
- Embark and disembark coaches, trains and buses without assistance
- Manage multiple flights of stairs without assistance and at a reasonable pace as many train stations do not have escalators or elevators
- Walk from train stations for up to 20 minutes to our destinations, at a reasonable pace
- Undertake walking tours, possibly on uneven ground, and stand for periods of time in galleries, studios and museums
- Be on their feet for much of the day
- Keep up with the group, walking at a moderate pace
- Use combined shower-over-bath facilities as it is not always possible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities

Please be honest with yourself regarding your abilities. Unfortunately, this may not be the right tour for you if your fitness is compromised, you can't sit on the floor, or you use mobility aids.

You should consult your doctor for up to date medical travel information. You must carry face masks and your own personal first aid kit at all times, containing paracetamol, 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 you are up to date with regular vaccinations including flu, Covid-19, tetanus, etc. You may also wish to be vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis or measles if recommended by your doctor. Some vaccines require more than one dose so arrange your medical appointment at least 4-6 weeks prior to departure.

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. Please bring a few masks with you on tour.

Accommodation

The hotel ratings on this trip are rated as 3 and 4 stars. They are comfortable but not luxury; please don't expect 5 star. The starting and finishing hotels are Western style, while the Nagoya hotel is Japanese style (tatami mats, futons on the floor, onsen bath). Please note that Japanese hotel rooms are surprisingly tiny. 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.

Starting point hotel: hotel in Ueno, Tokyo (Name and address TBA closer to departure)
Check in time is 3:00pm. if you arrive before this time and you room isn't ready, Reception staff will store your luggage in the meantime.

Finishing point hotel : hotel in Sanjo-Kawaramachi, Kyoto (Name and address TBA closer to departure)
Check out time is 11:00am. If your flight departs later in the day, Reception staff will store your luggage.

A note about our Nagoya accommodation – this form of accommodation is a traditional style where guests sleep on futons on tatami mats on the floor. This hotel also has a hot springs onsen.

Accommodation on this trip is on a twin room share basis if you are travelling with a relative or friend, or a single room basis if you are a solo traveller.

IMPORTANT: Please note our policy regarding solo travellers on our Japan tours. In the past, solo travellers had the option of sharing a room with other solo travellers. However, due to the (very small) size of Japanese hotel rooms and feedback from past clients, we are no longer offering to pair up strangers to share a twin room. If you are hoping for a twin share place, please invite a friend or relative with whom you know you can comfortably share a small, intimate space. (Note, solo twin share options are still available on our tours in other destinations).

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 before the tour in Tokyo or after the tour in Kyoto 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.

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 Tokyo so in-bound flights should be booked to arrive at Narita Airport (NRT) or Haneda (HND) in Tokyo.

The tour *concludes* in Kyoto so you should book your out-bound flight from Kansai Airport (KIX) or Itami (ITM) in nearby Osaka.

Note, if you wish to fly both in and out of Tokyo, remember to factor in the time (and cost) of returning to Tokyo at the conclusion of the tour.

Please book an arrival flight that allows you to attend the briefing meeting at 5:00pm on Day 1. Remember to allow enough time to clear Passport Control and then travel into Tokyo (approx. 40 minutes from Haneda and 90 minutes from Narita). 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 transfers ARE NOT included in the tour price however we can arrange these for you at additional cost. All Tokyo and Osaka airports have rail services, so you may prefer to travel by train, or arrange your own transfers via companies such as http://www.airportstaxitransfers.com

Transport

We utilise public transport on this tour for the majority of the time, with the exception of a couple of rural day trips. We will be taking trains, buses, the occasional taxi, shinkansen (bullet train) and a private coach.

Meals

While travelling with us you'll experience a vast array of wonderful foods. Part of a Japan adventure is trying dango, sushi and okonomiyaki!

Most of the lunches and dinners are not included in the tour price, allowing for flexibility in budgets, however we will often dine as a group at lunchtimes for convenience, as we move from morning to afternoon activities.

Travellers with particular dietary requirements or food allergies are required to advise us at the time of booking. We will endeavor to cater for specific requirements where possible, however 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. Unfortunately this tour is not suitable for coeliacs or vegans.

Water

It's safe to drink tap water in Japan. Please carry your own refillable drink bottle with you each day so we're not buying bottled water and contributing to waste and landfill.

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 recommended.

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 compulsory 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. If you have credit card insurance, we need details of the policy number and a 24 hour emergency contact number not just the bank's name and credit card details. We recommend that you take out travel insurance as soon as you pay your deposit. Insurers will generally allow you to adjust the dates for which you are covered, however if you extend the period for which you are covered, additional charges will apply. Some insurers may charge an amendment fee. Please be sure to carefully note the circumstances under which your chosen insurer will cover you for cancellation.

Passports and Visas

Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the duration of your trip and have at least one blank page. Please ensure the name on your passport matches the name on your booking form and airline tickets.

As per Japan's visa waiver program, citizens of most countries are not required to apply for a visa for short stays. However it is your responsibility to check the requirements specific to your nationality with your nearest Japanese embassy or consulate.

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 July 2025:

JPY	AUD	USD	EURO
50.00 coin	0.50	0.35	0.30
100 coin	1.00	0.70	0.60
500 coin	5.15	3.40	3.00
1000 note	10.30	6.80	5.80
2000 note	20.65	13.60	11.60
5000 note	51.60	34.00	30.00
10,000 note	103.25	68.00	58.00

Japan is predominantly a cash society and locals carry large amounts of cash for daily business. International debit/credit cards MasterCard and Visa can be used at major departments or large restaurants and cash from non-Japanese bank accounts can be withdrawn at all post office ATMs around the country, as well as most Lawson and 7-Eleven 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, three lunches and two dinners – you will need to buy the remainder of the meals. Restaurants and food outlets to suit all budgets can be found.

Shopping

This is not a shopping focused tour. There are several companies offering shopping tours, and there are also serious scholarly tours. Our tour falls somewhere in the middle, with a focus on cultural and handcraft/textile exploration, and a healthy dollop of fun and laughter, rather than a two week shopping spree. Having said that, Japan is a fabulous shopping destination and there are a couple of free periods in the itinerary which can be used for shopping time, plus an afternoon at Nippori Textile Town, and a visit to a flea market. We can also point out the locations of the famous hidden needle shop, the best vintage kimono shops and Kyoto's best fabric shop (Nomura Tailor) for more textile exploration in your free time.

Feedback from our travellers is always split 50:50. "Too much shopping time!" "Not enough shopping time!" We think that suggests we've found the right balance, while also acknowledging we can't please all the people all the time.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary in Japan in restaurants, taxis or for most service providers.

However if you are happy with our guide's services, a tip would be appreciated at the conclusion of the tour. A suggested amount is approx. Y1000 per person per day.

Phone and internet

You must have internet access throughout the tour and during the day (ie. not just wifi via our hotels in the evenings) to allow phone contact with the guide, for access to online maps, and in case you get lost while we're out and about and we need to call you. This is not optional! If you get lost we need to be able to locate you safely and efficiently so as to not negatively impact the rest of the group, our workshop hosts, OR the day's schedule. We use a WhatsApp group for contact during the tour and to share messages and reminders of meeting times/places etc. Please attend to your phone data arrangements before the tour commences.

We recommend one of the following options:

- Purchase an e-SIM, such as HolaFly or Airalo. This means you can keep your existing physical SIM (and phone no.) in place. If you choose an Airalo e-SIM, feel free to use the code SUSAN7066 for a small discount.
- Purchase a global roaming package from your mobile/cell provider before you leave home.
- 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 hotel. Please allow plenty of time to arrange this.

Note that if you need to download or update any smartphone apps for use in Japan, please do so before you leave home. App stores often do not work outside your home location.

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 case of an emergency, the local emergency number to dial in Japan is 119. Our tour operator's emergency telephone 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

Guests will find a suggested **Packing List** uploaded to the tour webpage closer to departure. Generally speaking you should pack as lightly as possible as you will be expected to manage your own luggage. ONE modest sized suitcase with wheels or a backpack is recommended. Remember to check the dimensions permitted by the airline[s] you'll be flying with. Please ensure your suitcase weighs under 20kg and its combined dimensions of height, width & depth do not exceed 200cm as our luggage will be transferred between cities and the courier companies have size and weight restrictions. You'll also need a small daypack for day trips, for carrying water, umbrella, camera, etc and most importantly, to function as an overnight bag when our luggage is couriered ahead.

Please ensure all luggage is lockable and clearly labelled on the outside.

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.

- Social responsibility - as a women's textile travel organisation, retreat|recreate strives to visit places where you can purchase textiles and 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.
- Photography – always ask before photographing people such as our workshop hosts and teachers, studio hosts, and shopkeepers, and/or their work spaces and techniques. Do not photograph children.
- 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 at shrines and temples – as a guideline, consider how you would dress when entering a church, synagogue or mosque in your home country (ie. no plunging necklines, shorts or short hemlines please).
- 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.

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 and some businesses so please ensure you carry clean socks with you at all times (bare feet are considered impolite).
- Blowing your nose, talking loudly and eating in public are all considered impolite.
- Talking on public transport (trains and buses) is not encouraged. Turn your mobile phone to silent and refrain from speaking loudly. 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.

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.

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!

It's going to be a wonderful trip ☺

Any other questions? Just ask!

Email Susan at retreatrecreate@gmail.com