



JAPAN

UJA KDS MISSION

ITINERARY

MARCH 25 - APRIL 2, 2025

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WELCOME

Dear Friends,

Welcome to UJA's KDS Mission to Japan! We are absolutely thrilled to embark on this incredible journey with you and deeply grateful that you've chosen to be part of this experience.

Together, we'll explore a country of breathtaking landscapes, rich traditions, and a fascinating history. But beyond discovering Japan, our mission holds a deeper purpose—connecting with the Japanese Jewish community. In strengthening these bonds, we reaffirm our shared commitment to a global Jewish future. Now more than ever, unity and resilience are essential for the Jewish people worldwide.

Your presence here is a testament to your extraordinary philanthropic leadership and generosity. Through UJA, your support nurtures Jewish well-being today and safeguards a vibrant Jewish tomorrow. Thanks to you, Jewish life continues to flourish, and for that, we are profoundly grateful.

We would also like to extend our deepest thanks to our dedicated Mission Chairs, Ron Baruch and Leslie Richmond, whose vision and hard work have made this journey possible.

We hope this experience is unforgettable—a journey of discovery, connection, and lasting impact.

Sincerely,



Sara Lefton
Chief Development Officer



Anna-Rachel Krakowsky
Vice President, Philanthropic Leadership

ITINERARY AT A GLANCE



DAY 1	● TOKYO	Welcome to Japan! Discover Tokyo's contrasting cultures, from ancient to modern trendsetting Welcome dinner
DAY 2	● TOKYO	Explore Asakusa Visit the local Jewish Community Centre Sumo and teamLab visit Dinner on own
DAY 3	● TOKYO >> KYOTO	Depart Tokyo, travel to Kyoto Explore Kyoto, the cultural centre of Japan
DAY 4	● KYOTO	Day trip to Kobe Kabbalat Shabbat in Kyoto
DAY 5	● KYOTO	Shabbat in Kyoto Afternoon walking tour in Kyoto Dinner on own
DAY 6	● KYOTO	Day trip to Uji, the matcha capital of Japan Sake brewery tour in Osaka Dinner in Kyoto
DAY 7	● KYOTO >> HAKONE	Depart Kyoto for Hakone Explore Hakone and visit the famous Open-Air Museum Dinner on own
DAY 8	● HAKONE	Discover Hakone, with breathtaking sites and picturesque views Immersive cultural experience Farewell dinner
DAY 9	● HAKONE >> TOKYO	Mission concludes Depart Hakone, travel to Tokyo for return flights to Canada

Note: Itinerary subject to change.



DAY 1

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

WELCOME TO TOKYO—OUR KDS MISSION TO JAPAN OFFICIALLY STARTS THIS MORNING!

8:45 AM To begin our mission, we will start with a warm welcome at our hotel—The Okura Tokyo. Consistently ranked as one of the best hotels in Japan, the Okura Tokyo has a long history of luxury, welcoming politicians, celebrities, and royalty alike—from President Ford and President Obama to Prince (now King) Charles and Princess Diana. Enjoy the hotel's 25-metre heated swimming pool and fitness centre, which overlooks the city from the 26th floor, or try one of the many restaurants on site, including the Starlight Bar & Lounge on the top floor, which provides excellent views of Tokyo lit up at night.

HELPFUL TIP: *We suggest wearing comfortable shoes for walking, as we will have a long day exploring the city. Layers are encouraged. Expect a difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures in Tokyo, with cooler mornings and evenings—typically 5-8 degrees Celsius—and afternoon highs of 15 degrees.*

9:15 AM After a short introduction and welcome, we will get the day started with a visit to the **Imperial Palace**, before exploring the **Marunouchi** and **Ginza neighbourhoods**.

The **Imperial Palace** is the primary residence of the Emperor of Japan, located on the site of the former Edo Castle. Explore the grounds of this regal residence for a glimpse into Japan's rich history and cultural heritage and visit the famous Nijubashi bridge—two bridges that form together and provide an entrance to the inner palace grounds. You can also see remnants of the old Edo Castle, from imposing stone walls and moats to the Fujimi-Yagura watchtower.

Edo Castle was the former seat of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled Japan from 1603 until 1867. In 1868, the shogunate was overthrown and the castle became the residence of the Emperor, renamed to Tokyo Castle. While Edo Castle faced damage from fires over the years, most of the castle was destroyed during World War II, with only some remnants remaining.

From the Imperial Palace, we will visit the neighbouring Marunouchi district—one of Japan's most prestigious business districts and a hub for Japan's leading companies (particularly in the financial sector). Once housing the estates of feudal lords during the Edo period (1603-1868), this neighbourhood is now home to modern skyscrapers.

Pass by **Tokyo Station**—one of the busiest train stations in the world and a terminal station for many *shinkansen* (bullet train) lines—and take in this historical landmark's impressive architecture. At street level on the Marunouchi side, admire its red-brick facade and domed roof dating back to 1914—the station was restored in 2012 to its original neo-baroque architecture.

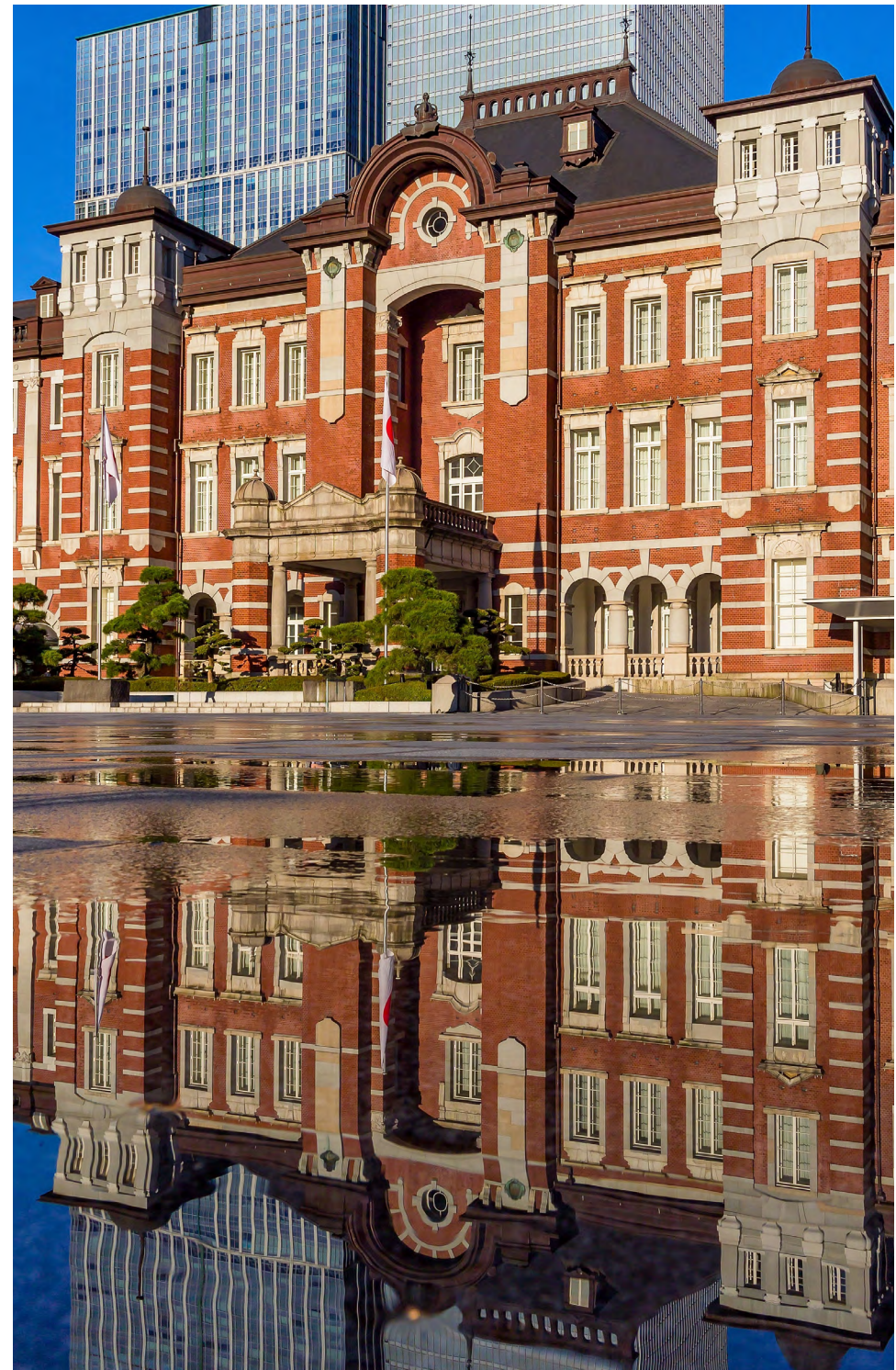
10:45 AM To end our morning exploring, we will visit the **Ginza District**, a historical neighbourhood now known for modern-day luxuries and some of the city's best shopping. Here you will find high-end boutiques, department stores, and spacious galleries, along with Michelin-starred restaurants, popular nightclubs, and trendy cafés.

Formerly the site of a silver coin mint during the Edo period, the neighbourhood saw a rebirth after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, emerging as a premiere shopping district in the country.

Prior to lunch, we will take some time to stroll around and check out local shops and cafés.

12:00 PM *Depart Ginza. Bus transfer to lunch.*

12:30 PM Following a morning spent exploring, enjoy an authentic *shojin ryori* lunch—a traditional Buddhist vegan cuisine in Japan—where we will **reflect on the life of Chiune Sempo Sugihara**, a diplomat appointed to the Japanese consulate in Lithuania during World War II. Often called the '**Japanese Schindler**,' he was responsible for saving thousands of Jewish lives by issuing transit visas to those looking to flee persecution. **Hear more about his lasting impact from Chiune Sugihara's granddaughter**, as well Tatsuya Masubuchi from the *Sempo Legacy Project*.



2:00 PM This afternoon, we will continue with our tour of Tokyo, exploring the city's west end—home to the Meiji Shrine, Shibuya crossing, and world-famous Harajuku neighbourhood.

A serene *Shinto* shrine located amongst a peaceful forest in the heart of Tokyo—covering approximately 175 acres and home to 120,000+ trees—the **Meiji Shrine** and the surrounding **Yoyogi Park** are a tranquil respite in the heart of this fast-paced urban city; comparable to Central Park in New York or London's Regent Park.

The shrine was built from 1915–1920 in honour of Emperor Meiji and his empress and recognizes his role in modernizing Japan—a period commonly referred to as the Meiji Restoration, when the emperor was restored to power and the country's feudal system dismantled. Destroyed during World War II, the shrine was rebuilt in 1958.

During the Meiji period, there was a large focus on education and growth, with heavy investments made by the emperor and his government into new businesses and technology, including transportation and communication. Japanese scholars were sent abroad to study western languages and sciences, while foreigners were invited into Japan to teach. However, this period also saw the growth of extreme Japanese nationalism, made stronger by the Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War.

3:15 PM From the Meiji Shrine, we will visit the **Harajuku neighbourhood**—Tokyo's modern fashion epicentre and the birthplace of *kawaii* street fashion. At the centre of Japan's youth culture since the 1960s and evolving with each new generation, Harajuku has remained a trendsetting neighbourhood where Tokyo's creative energy is on full display.

Kawaii style and aesthetic is generally defined as cute, young, innocent, and childish. Picture manga and anime, bright outfits, excessive pastel, hearts and stars, cartoonish faces with exaggerated facial expressions and wide eyes, anthropomorphic animals, and more. Famous examples include Sailor Moon, Pokémon, and Hello Kitty.

Within the kawaii aesthetic, there are different styles and subcultures. For instance, 'Shibu-kawaii' focuses on an everyday-wear approach and uses soft pastel tones with an overall focus on

understated cuteness. 'Yume kawaii' also uses pastel colours, but is more dreamlike, with a nod to fantasy.

The Harajuku neighbourhood is divided by a boulevard called Meiji-Dori, which separates its two main areas: Takeshita Street and Ura-Harajuku.

Takeshita Street is on the side most internationally associated with Harajuku and an extremely popular pedestrian street, overflowing with fashion boutiques, sweet crepe stands, cafés, and innovative snack shops designed for Instagram. Ura-Harajuku has retained a more relaxed atmosphere, the streets filled with high-end vintage shops, Japanese streetwear flagship stores, privately-owned boutiques, and cafés. You'll also find Omotesando Street bordering Ura-Harajuku—this street known for luxury fashion and restaurants.

For those needing rest, transportation will be available to bring participants back to the hotel from the Meiji Shrine.



4:30 PM After exploring the Harajuku neighbourhood, we will return to our hotel to freshen up and relax before dinner. For anyone who transferred from another city or hotel in the morning, you will have this time to check in at the hotel and get settled.

HELPFUL TIP: As we are meeting the Ambassador to Israel, we suggest dressing in casual business attire or whatever you feel most comfortable in. Please note that strong fragrances are discouraged at dinner.

6:00 PM *Depart hotel for dinner.*

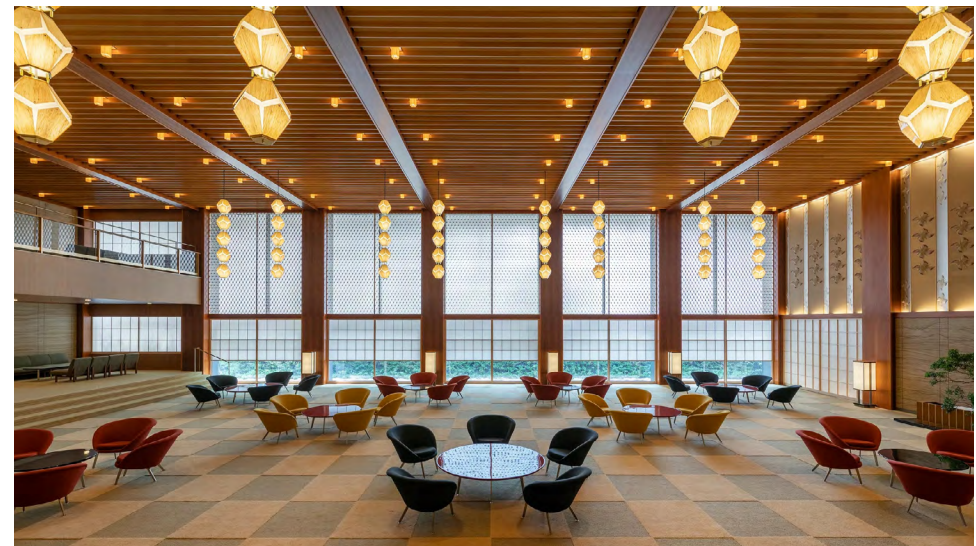
6:30 PM This evening, we will all gather as a group for a special **welcome dinner, where we will be joined by the Ambassador Gilad Cohen—the Israeli Ambassador to Japan.**

Start with a traditional Japanese ritual to celebrate the beginning of our mission, before eating world-class sushi prepared by chef Yoshinori Tezuka, a fourth-generation sushi master and sommelier. Enjoy this exclusive experience in Chef Yoshi's family restaurant, which has been operating for more than 100 years. A certified *fugu* (blowfish) chef, Yoshinori Tezuka has cooked for dignitaries, royalty, and celebrities alike.

OPTIONAL: After dinner, join an optional visit to Shibuya. Though one of the 23 wards in Tokyo, Shibuya is most commonly associated with the popular shopping and entertainment neighbourhood within the ward, where bustling streets are packed with shoppers and bright lights dominate.

Just outside Shibuya station's Hachiko Exit lies the world-famous Shibuya Crossing, one of the busiest pedestrian crossings in the world—this crossing is often referred to as the “Shibuya scramble” because traffic is stopped in all directions to allow pedestrians to walk through the intersection. During peak times, it is estimated that 1,000-2,500 people make their way across this intersection every two minutes, resulting in a human scramble.

OVERNIGHT IN TOKYO: THE OKURA TOKYO



DAY 2

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

This morning, we will start with breakfast at the hotel before departing to explore the contrasting duality of Tokyo, with a tour of the city's old and new.

HELPFUL TIP: *Wear comfortable shoes for walking, with a long day exploring the city and a visit to Jewish community centre. Layers are encouraged.*

9:00 AM *Depart hotel.*

9:30 AM Visit the **Asakusa** neighbourhood, once a famed entertainment district during the Edo period (1603–1868), and the current home to the city's red-light district and countless *kabuki* theatres. While there was some modernization over the years, particularly with the introduction of movie theatres in the early 20th century, the neighbourhood maintained its historical charm. However, there was large destruction during World War II, with only remnants of the old red-light district remaining. In its wake, a new entertainment district has slowly emerged, made popular by the surviving **Sensō-ji** temple and the nearby Tokyo SkyTree.

Sensō-ji (also known as Asakusa Kannon) is Tokyo's oldest temple—founded in 628 AD—and dedicated to Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy. One of the most photographed sites in Japan, the temple is renowned for its impressive architecture and vibrant atmosphere. Sadly, after standing tall for 1,300 years, it fell during the firebombings of Tokyo in World War II, only to be rebuilt during the aftermath as a symbol of peace and resurrection to the Japanese people.

Pass through the main gate, **Kaminarimon** (Thunder Gate), which is one of the most recognizable symbols of Tokyo, known for the large brightly painted lantern dominating its entrance. Just beyond Senso-ji's Kaminarimon, explore **Nakamisedori**—a vibrant shopping street lined with souvenir shops, selling everything from Samurai swords to paper fans, and all manner of snacks and trinkets. Here you can try some of the country's best *dorayaki* (a sweet red bean pancake sandwich) at Kameju.



11:30 AM *Bus transfer to the local Jewish community centre.*

12:00 PM Next, we will visit the **Jewish Community of Japan (JCJ)**—the local Jewish community centre in Tokyo and home to the city’s Hebrew school. The JCJ opened in its current location in 1953 with a black-tie celebration attended by Japan’s Prince and Princess Mikasa.

Enjoy **lunch with prominent members of the local Jewish community**, including Jonathan S. Tischler, President of the JCJ, who will share insights into Jewish life in Japan.

***Jonathan S. Tischler** is the director of Research-Equity at Credit Suisse Securities (Japan) Ltd. and head of HOLT Asia Pacific. Previously, he worked as an associate analyst at Credit Suisse (USA).*

We will also be joined by Jerome “Jerry” Rosenberg, a key figure in Tokyo’s Jewish community for over 45 years.

***Jerry Rosenberg** previously served as president of the Jewish Community of Japan (JCJ) for five years and a board member for two decades. A longtime business leader, he held executive roles at Christian Dior Cosmetics Japan and Tumi Japan before founding his own consulting firm in 2001. In retirement, he represents the American Jewish Committee’s Asia Pacific Institute and lectures on Jewish history in Japan, cementing his legacy as both a business and community leader.*

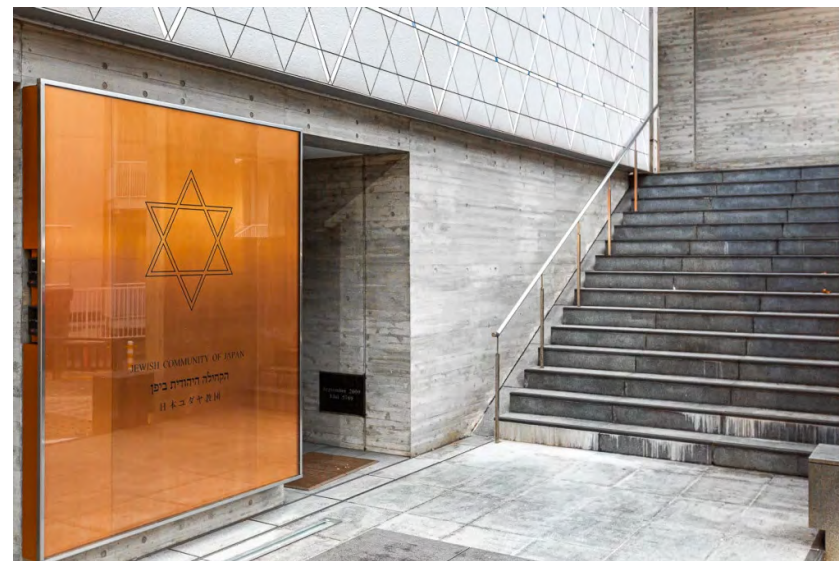
After lunch, enjoy a **behind-the-scenes tour** of the JCJ.

2:30 PM *Depart JCJ. Travel to North Tokyo.*

3:30 PM After lunch, **discover the art of sumo**—a traditional Japanese sport that dates back to the 16th century. Learn about the athletes’ daily training regimen and preparation process, the longstanding history of the sport, as well as some basic techniques before trying it out for yourself.

5:00 PM *Depart Yokozuna Tonkatsu Dosukoi Tanaka for teamLab Borderless Tokyo.*

5:45 PM To end our day, visit the newly relocated **teamLab Borderless Tokyo** art experience at Azabudai Hills. For those who wish to return early to the hotel before dinner, teamLab is a 10-minute walk from the hotel and/or transportation can be arranged.



Founded in 2001, **teamLab** is an international art collective, renowned for its interdisciplinary art forms and immersive digital installations that blend art, technology, science, and nature. Consisting of artists, digital programmers, engineers, animators, mathematicians, and architects, teamLab aims to explore the relationship between humans, the environment, oneself with the world around them, and the concept of time—all through immersive displays and experiences. Their work is designed to challenge traditional perceptions of art, and to remove the boundaries between physical space, digital space, and human perception. teamLab has held exhibitions in cities worldwide, including New York, Paris, London, Singapore, Beijing, Melbourne, and more, with permanent exhibitions in Japan, as well as Beijing and Macao.

Wander through the space at your own pace, where boundaries disappear, and digital art seamlessly flows from one room to the next.

After, we will return to our hotel where you can relax and freshen up before enjoying an evening in Tokyo at leisure, with dinner on your own. Whether you prefer a quick bite before exploring the city by night or luxuriating over a traditional multi-course meal, there are countless options.

For those who prefer to dine with a group, join an optional group dinner with guest **Joe Singer**.

OVERNIGHT IN TOKYO: THE OKURA TOKYO



DAY 3

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025

This morning, we will start the day with breakfast at the hotel before checking out and a private transfer to the train station. **Please note that all luggage needs to be brought to the lobby by 8:00 AM.** A private porter service will collect all luggage and deliver to our hotel in Kyoto.

HELPFUL TIP: *Dress comfortably for the train, followed by a day of walking. Layers are recommended. In Kyoto, expect a difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures, with cooler mornings typically ranging from 5-8 degrees Celsius, and afternoon highs ranging from 13-15 degrees.*

9:00 AM *Depart hotel.*

10:00 AM Leaving Tokyo, we will take the world-renowned *Shinkansen* (bullet train) to Kyoto—the ride is approximately just over two hours. Enjoy a traditional Japanese *bento* lunch on the train. Upon arrival, we will begin our time in Kyoto with an afternoon tour of the cultural capital of Japan.

Train departs at 10:24 AM, arriving at Kyoto Station at 12:39 PM.

1:00 PM Upon arrival in Kyoto, we will visit the **Nanzen-ji Temple** and surrounding grounds at the base of the Higashiyama Mountains. With history dating back to the 13th century, Nanzen-ji is one of the most important examples of a Zen Buddhist temple in Japan. Explore the vast complex, where you will find 12 sub-temples sprinkled throughout, along with a red-brick Meiji-era aqueduct from the late 19th century.

Take pictures at the widely photographed **Heian-jingu Shrine**, built in 1895 in commemoration of the city's 1,100th anniversary as the capital of Japan. It is most recognizable by the towering red torii gate marking the entrance at over 24 metres tall—one of the largest in Japan. This shrine honours the spirits of Emperors Kammu and Komei—the city's first and last emperors. Its bright vermilion and white buildings are a replica of the original Heian Palace, set amidst stunning gardens with seasonal flowers, ponds, and bridges.

Time permitting, we will end our afternoon with a light walk along the **Keage Incline**. A historic railway track in Kyoto, it was once used to transport boats between different levels of the Lake Biwa Canal using a funicular system. Spanning approximately 582 metres, the Keage Incline was constructed as part of an ambitious Meiji-era engineering project, aimed at connecting Kyoto with Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture for water transport and hydroelectric power. While the tracks are no longer in use, it's a popular spot for a stroll, especially in spring, when the area is lined with stunning cherry blossoms.



3:30 PM *Depart for hotel.*

4:00 PM Following our afternoon tour, we will make our way to our hotel, the Westin Miyako Kyoto, to check in and freshen up before dinner.

HELPFUL TIP: For dinner, smart-casual attire is recommended. However, please note that no shoes are allowed in the restaurant—shoes will be left at the entrance so please wear socks.

5:30 PM *Depart hotel for dinner.*

6:00 PM This evening, we will enjoy a Michelin-star *Kyo-Kaiseki* style dinner at **Honke Tankuma Honten**. *Kyo-Kaiseki* is a traditional Kyoto-style *kaiseki* cuisine—a refined multi-course dining experience that showcases seasonal ingredients, delicate presentation, and meticulous preparation. Rooted in Kyoto's culinary traditions, each course is thoughtfully arranged to highlight the season and local ingredients with a balance of taste, texture, and colour.

Dinner will be followed by a **traditional geisha performance**. *Geisha* (also known as *geiko* in Kyoto) are traditional female Japanese entertainers known for their refined skills in performing arts, including dance, classical Japanese music, and conversation.

Geisha train extensively to perfect their craft. Their performances are celebrated for their authenticity and cultural significance. Traditionally held in ochaya (teahouses) or at annual public events like the Miyako Odori (Cherry Blossom Dance), these performances showcase the graceful dances and music integral to Kyoto's—and Japan's—heritage.



OVERNIGHT IN KYOTO: THE WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO

DAY 4

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025

Today we will start with an early breakfast at the hotel before we enjoy a **day trip to Kobe**. A vibrant port city in the Kansai region of Japan, Kobe is known for its scenic harbor, cultural diversity, historical sites, and culinary delights—most notably Kobe beef (a type of Wagyu with exquisite marbling, tenderness, and rich flavour). As we make our way to Kobe, learn more about the history of Kobe and the importance of this port city.

HELPFUL TIP: *Dress comfortably for a day of walking and transit. Walking shoes and layers are encouraged*

8:30 AM *Depart hotel.*

10:00 AM Upon arrival in Kobe, we will **meet with Rabbi Shmuel Vishedsky**—Head Rabbi for the Jewish Community of Kansai—who will join us for a morning of exploration while providing further insight into the lives of the local Jewish community, and the history of the community. With the opening of its international port, Kobe became a central hub for Japan's small Jewish community, with one of the country's first synagogues built in the Kansai neighbourhood.

Often referred to as "Kobe Jewcom," the Jewish community of Kobe provided refuge to Jews fleeing Europe during World War II, with around 4,600 staying temporarily in the city through "visas for life." A signboard in Kobe's historic Kitano district commemorates these interactions, located where the once Western-style building that housed Kobe Jewcom's office was situated—the building was destroyed in an air raid in 1945.

The signboard is in Kitano-cho, a historic Kobe district at the foot of the Rokko Mountains, known for its unique foreign residences from the mid-to-late 19th century. After the Port of Kobe opened in 1868, the city attracted European merchants and businessmen. Their mansions, called *Ijinkan*, blended European design with Japanese architecture. Many remain open to the public, including the Weathercock House (1909) and the Moegi House (1903). Others have been repurposed into restaurants, cafés, and boutiques.





Next, we will **visit Jewish cemetery, a part of the Kobe Municipal Foreign Cemetery on Futatabi Mountain**. The cemetery was established in the 1950s when the city relocated all foreign cemeteries to this site. Nestled in a scenic woodland park, it is meticulously maintained and includes designated plots for various religions.

Kobe's Jewish cemetery has two plots: an older one, predominantly Ashkenazi, and a newer one, primarily Mizrahi. The older plot reflects the early Jewish settlers from Russia and Europe, many of whom arrived in the 19th century and passed away young in the early 20th century. In contrast, the newer plot is home to Jews from Middle Eastern countries who arrived in the early 1900s and generally lived to old age. The cemetery's tombstones chronicle the evolving Jewish community of Kobe over time.

Time permitting, we will hop on the **Kobe Nunobiki Ropeway**—a scenic aerial cable car system that takes visitors from the base of the city up to the top of Mount Rokko, offering stunning panoramic views of the city, the surrounding port area, and the nearby Osaka Bay. It also provides an opportunity to see the lush greenery of the mountain. At the top, visit the **Nunobiki Herb Gardens**, one of the largest herb gardens in Japan, where the plants, herbs, and flowers are arranged in themed sections. In addition to the gardens, you'll find a greenhouse and fragrance museum, along with a terrace café that uses the fresh garden herbs for its dishes and tea.

1:00 PM Enjoy a private lunch at the picturesque Soshuen Garden, where we will further discuss the city's Jewish ties, joined by Moshe Chaim Chassen—a long time Jewish resident of Japan and our group's own personal *mashgiach*. Set in a beautiful wooden building, Soshuen Garden is a three-story estate built in 1934 that was once a private residence for the head of the former zaibatsu conglomerate. The surrounding garden has over 500 varieties of trees and flowers, making for a beautiful backdrop, especially during spring.

2:30 PM *Return to Kyoto by bus.*

- 4:00 PM** You will have some time to freshen up before shabbat commences at 5:57 PM.
- 6:00 PM** Tonight, enjoy a **Kabbalat shabbat** experience at Chabad, before returning to the hotel for dinner.
- 7:15 PM** **Enjoy dinner at the hotel with special guest Aaron Hopes**—a Jewish American living in Okinawa, Japan. **We will also be joined by ally Dr. Satoko Kamoshida** (TBC)—an academic and researcher at the University of Tokyo, specializing in Yiddish, Israeli Studies, and Minority Studies.

***Aaron Hopes** is a PhD candidate at Stanford University; his thesis explores the intersection of political anthropology and multispecies studies, focusing on how ecological discourses and non-human entities shape responses to U.S. military infrastructure in Okinawa and mainland Japan. Through political ethnography, Aaron examines the evolution of demilitarization movements, particularly the women-led hikitoru undō that emerged in Osaka in 2015, and their impact on Japanese political ideologies, local autonomy, and settler migration to Okinawa. His fieldwork spans Okinawa's Yambaru rainforest, Osaka's Taishō Ward, and Yufuin in Kyushu, where he conducts participant observation, archival research, and interviews, supplemented by U.S. military documents obtained through FOIA requests.*

***Dr. Satoko Kamoshida** is a project researcher at the University of Tokyo and a lecturer at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, she collaborates with scholars at CERMOM (INALCO) in Paris and researches Jewish communities in France. Her work examines collective memory and language learning in Jewish communities worldwide. She earned her PhD from the University of Tokyo in 2011, with a dissertation on Yiddish publications and language learning in Israel, later published by Sangensha in 2014. Beyond academia, she promotes Jewish languages and cultures to non-Jewish audiences while introducing Japanese culture globally. She has co-authored several books, including *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Culture* (2024) and *The 62 Chapters to Understand the State of Israel* (2012–2018). Her research appears in academic and general-interest journals, and she translates Hebrew, Yiddish, and English works.*

OVERNIGHT IN KYOTO: THE WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO

DAY 5

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

This morning, start your day with breakfast at the hotel before attending optional morning services at Chabad of Kyoto. Alternatively, enjoy a leisurely morning on your own, whether with spa and beauty services at the hotel or with a stroll around the neighbourhood.

10:00 AM OPTIONAL: For those interested, start your morning with an optional guided walking tour through Kyoto's serene landscapes.

Begin at **Murin-an Garden**, the historic villa and garden of Yamagata Aritomo—one of Japan's leading statesmen during the Meiji period (1868–1912) and the Taishō period (1912–1926). The villa is designed in an understated traditional style, with *tatami* mat floors and sliding *shoji* doors, allowing for a seamless connection between the interior and the garden. While a private residence, it also served as a meeting place for political discussions, including talks that led to the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), making it a significant site in Japan's modern history. The garden at Murin-an, which was completed in 1986, is an example of a Japanese strolling garden, where natural elements like water, plants, and rocks seamlessly blend to create a tranquil, picturesque setting.

Continue along the **Philosopher's Path**, a scenic 2-kilometre walkway lined with cherry blossom trees, following a quiet canal. Named after philosopher Nishida Kitaro, who meditated here daily, the path is dotted with charming shops, restaurants, and shrines, including Honen-in Temple with its iconic thatched-roof gate. If time allows, visit **Higashiyama Jisho-ji**, also known as Ginkakuji or the “Silver Pavilion.” Originally built as a shogun's retirement villa, it later became a Zen temple in 1490. Though not actually silver, its dark lacquered exterior once reflected moonlight, giving it a silvery glow and securing its place as a cultural icon of Kyoto.

12:00 PM Enjoy a traditional Shabbat lunch at Chabad with **Rabbi Moti Grumach**. For those who spent the morning at leisure, gather in the lobby of the hotel before walking over to Chabad.

1:30 PM Following lunch at Chabad, we will return to the hotel by foot to freshen up and rest.

3:00 PM This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of Kyoto, where we will explore the **Higashiyama District**—one of the best-preserved historical neighbourhoods in Kyoto.

HELPFUL TIP: Wear comfortable shoes for an afternoon of walking. If you plan on staying out for dinner after the tour, please dress with consideration for your dinner plans.

Walk along the ancient sloping cobblestone streets of **Ninenzaka** and **Sannenzaka**, which are lined with small shops, cafés, and restaurants retaining their traditional *Taishōt* design. Here you'll find local specialties and crafts like *kiyomizu-yaki* pottery and *wagashi* (sweet Japanese desserts made with azuki bean paste). You'll also find kimono for sale along with Kyoto-style Japanese dolls, which first became popular in the Heian period (794–1185). Admire the old *machiya* townhouses from the Edo period (1603–1868) to Taishō period (1912–26), which remain preserved in a row along Sannenzaka street.

Machiya are traditional wooden townhouses found throughout Japan and typified in the historical capital of Kyoto.

Nearby, visit the **Kiyomizudera Temple**—one of Kyoto's oldest and most important Buddhist temples. Built in 780 AD, this temple is now most recognized for its wooden stage offering breathtaking views overlooking the city that juts out from the side of a mountain, supported by 13-metre-high wooden stilts.

Kiyomizudera is made up of multiple buildings and temples, including: 'Nio-mon,' the main entrance to the temple; 'Sai-mon' (the West gate), which was reconstructed in 1633 and has become a popular place to practice Nissokan meditation; 'Zuigu-do Hall,' which enshrines both Shinto and Buddhist deities of matchmaking, pregnancy, and safe birth; and 'Mondo,' the famed main hall, which houses the temple's primary object of worship— a small statue of the eleven-faced, thousand-armed Kannon Bodhisattva.

We will also visit the **Yasaka Pagoda** (also known as the Tower of Yasaka or Yasaka-no-To)—a Buddhist pagoda dating back to the sixth century, standing five stories tall. While once part of the Hokan-ji Temple, today this symbol of Kyoto is all that remains.

Throughout the afternoon, as we explore historic Kyoto, continue to **take in the breathtaking beauty of the sakura**—Japan's famous cherry blossom trees.

Tonight, enjoy Kyoto at your leisure with dinner on your own.

OVERNIGHT IN KYOTO: THE WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO



DAY 6

SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025

Start the morning with breakfast at the hotel before we embark on a **day trip to Uji**. Nestled between Kyoto and Nara, this small historic city is renowned for its world-class green tea, storied temples, and serene beauty. A centre of tea cultivation for centuries—producing some of Japan's finest matcha and sencha—Uji offers an unforgettable blend of culture, and tranquility. The city also features in *The Tale of Genji*—considered the world's first novel—cementing its place in Japan's literary and cultural history.

HELPFUL TIP: *Wear comfortable shoes and clothes today, as you will be spending time on a bus in transit. Layers are recommended.*

9:00 AM *Depart hotel for private transfer to Uji.*

10:00 AM Recognized globally for its unmatched quality, we will start our visit by learning more about Uji's history as the capital of Japan's green tea production with a hands-on workshop.

Dating back to the 12th century, this picturesque city became the birthplace of Japan's finest green tea traditions. Renowned for its perfect growing conditions and meticulous cultivation techniques, Uji's matcha and sencha teas have long been celebrated for their exceptional quality. Many of Japan's most famous tea masters have honed their craft here, making it a must-visit destination for tea enthusiasts.

Create your own traditional Japanese incense, made from upcycled Matcha—fine green tea particles collected during production but deemed unsuitable for food use. This sustainable approach turns what would otherwise be wasted into a beautiful and fragrant keepsake.

Mold your incense with the help of a traditional Japanese wooden mold, typically used in crafting intricate sweets—a perfect blend of culture and artistry. This hands-on activity not only introduces you to a lesser-known facet of Matcha craftsmanship but also provides a tranquil moment to connect with the timeless traditions of Japanese culture.

11:00 AM Next, visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site **Byodo-in Temple**—a perfect showcase of Japan's rich cultural and architectural history. Originally built in 998 as a villa for a powerful noble, it was later converted into a temple and is now a perfect example of Buddhist Pure Land (*Jodo*) architecture. The iconic Phoenix Hall, with its elegant design and phoenix statues perched atop the roof, can be found pictured on the 10-yen coin.

The temple's serene setting, with its reflection shimmering in the peaceful surrounding pond, offers a picture-perfect view that leaves visitors in awe. The on-site museum houses historical artifacts and provides deeper insight into the temple's significance.



12:00 PM *Depart Uji for Osaka Prefecture.*

1:00 PM This afternoon, we will head to **Osaka Prefecture**, we will visit a **sake brewery for tour and tasting, followed by a buffet-style lunch**. Learn about the origins of sake and the techniques that formed the basis of sake as we know it today. While sake is not nearly as impacted by terroir the way wine is, the flavour and style can vary from one brewery to another, depending on the amount of water added, as well as different brewing styles.

*Founded in 1826, **Daimon Brewery** is a family-run brewery that has mastered the art of sake brewing by blending time-honored techniques with modern innovation. Using pure, soft spring water from the Ikoma Mountains and carefully selected local sake rice, Daimon Brewery ensures its sake is exceptionally smooth and flavourful. Every bottle reflects the brewery's deep commitment to quality and tradition, making their sake a beloved choice for enthusiasts worldwide.*

4:00 PM Following the tour and tasting, we will return to our hotel in Kyoto.



5:30 PM After a short break at the hotel to rest and freshen up, will start our evening with **a performance from members of the Beit Shalom Choir**.

HELPFUL TIP: Consider smart-casual attire for the evening's activities.

7:30 PM Tonight, we will enjoy a **private dinner at Sodoh Higashiyama**. Built in 1929, it was the private residence of renowned Japanese painter Takeuchi Seiho. Spanning 1,700 tsubo (approximately 5,620 square metres), this nearly century-old home—restored in 2003—preserves the artist's legacy and passion.

We will be joined by special guest **Professor Ada Taggar Cohen**—a biblical scholar, specializing in Hittitology, focusing on the religion, language, and legal traditions of the Hittite Kingdom and their connections to biblical texts. Ada established the first Jewish Studies program at Doshisha University in 2004—this program, which offers undergraduate to PhD courses is first program of its kind in Japan.

***Professor Ada Taggar Cohen** was born in Jerusalem, she grew up among diverse religious communities and developed an early interest in ancient languages. She earned her PhD in Hittite studies, publishing *Hittite Priesthood* (2006). In addition to her work on the ancient world, she has taught Modern Hebrew for over 35 years and authored instructional books on Hebrew prepositions.*

Ada has organized numerous conferences on Jewish Studies, both in Japan and internationally, many of which have been supported by the CISMOR center at Doshisha University, where she is a core member.

Learn how the Japanese society has accepted Jews in both the past and present, with Ada sharing insightful anecdotes on the way the Japanese perceive Jews, including the lack of antisemitism found.

During dinner, a matcha tea maker will be present for those interested in sampling Japan's most famous and traditional tea.

OVERNIGHT IN KYOTO: THE WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO



DAY 7

MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025

Today we will start the morning with breakfast at the hotel before checking out and taking a private transfer to the train station. **Please note that all luggage needs to be brought to the lobby by 8:00 AM.**

A private porter service will collect all luggage and deliver to our hotel in Kyoto.

HELPFUL TIP: *Dress comfortably for the train, followed by an afternoon exploring Hakone. Layers are recommended. Hakone trends a few degrees cooler on average. Expect chilly mornings and evenings, with temperatures ranging from 3-5 degrees, and afternoon highs ranging from 8-12 degrees.*

10:00 AM *Depart hotel.*

11:00 AM Hop on the bullet train to Hakone—a popular hot spring resort town, known for its views of Mount Fuji, scenic boat rides, and beautiful nature. It's also famous for the Hakone Open-Air Museum, which combines art and nature.

Train departs at 10:33 AM, arriving at Odawara Station at 12:38 PM.

1:30 PM Upon arrival, we will spend the afternoon discovering the city, starting with a visit to the world-renowned **Hakone Open-Air Museum**—an outdoor sculpture park and museum, with sculptures and art installations from both Japanese and international artists, including Picasso, Rodin, Henry Moore, and Modigliani, to name a few. The museum's permanent collection includes over 300 works from Picasso in various mediums.

Sprawling across more than 70,000 square metres, the museum is set amongst landscaped gardens, ponds, and rolling hills. While exploring, sit back at the *ashiyu* (Footbath Square) and take in the art and surrounding landscapes while soaking your feet in a thermal bath.

Next, visit the **Hakone Museum of Art**, located in the lush slopes of the Gora. Here you will find a refined collection of Japanese ceramics that date back from prehistoric times through the Edo period (1603-1868)—from ancient earthenware to elegant Tokugawa-period

pieces. Surrounding the museum, stroll through picturesque gardens before we stop at a traditional teahouse for an authentic cup of matcha.

After, we will go to our hotel—the Hakone Gora Karaku—where we will check in and take a quick pause to freshen up. Here you will enjoy the luxury of a Japanese *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn) in the heart of Hakone, with breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and sea—distinctive features of the Kanagawa Prefecture. Enjoy one of the many private or public *onsen* baths at the hotel—*onsens* are traditional Japanese geothermal hot spring baths, famous for offering relaxing environments with therapeutic benefits.

5:00 PM **OPTIONAL:** Enjoy an exclusive after-hours visit to the **Okada Museum of Art**. Starting with a quick introduction, guests can explore the museum on their own.

Opened in 2013, the Okada Museum of Art features an impressive collection of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean art, from ancient times to today. Its galleries showcase ceramics, paintings, sculptures, and calligraphy, offering a rich look into East Asian artistry. A highlight is the large outdoor mural, “Wind God and Thunder God,” near the museum’s hot spring foot bath—a unique mix of relaxation and art. Surrounded by lush gardens, the Okada Museum provides a serene setting to explore the traditions and history of East Asian art.

Tonight, explore the city at your leisure with dinner on your own at the hotel or one of Hakone’s local restaurants.

OVERNIGHT IN HAKONE: THE GORA KARAKU



DAY 8

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

Start your morning with breakfast at the hotel before embarking on a private tour of Hakone and the scenic Kanagawa prefecture, known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage.

HELPFUL TIP: *Wear comfortable shoes and clothes today, with extra layers as we will be spending the morning outside.*

9:00 AM *Depart hotel.*

9:30 AM Visit **Owakudani**—a geological wonder that was formed thousands of years ago by a volcanic eruption, and today is known for its steaming hot springs, bubbling pools of boiling water, and the distinctive smell of sulfur that permeates the air. Here, you can enjoy soaking in the healing waters of this ancient region, a scenic gondola ride that offers astounding views of the surrounding mountains, and/or explore the walking trails that wind throughout the valley and observe geothermal activity up close.

Here you can try a traditional local dish called *kuro-tamago* (black egg). Eggs are hardboiled in hot springs, turning the shells black, and providing a very distinctive flavour. Legend suggests that eating one of these black eggs can add seven years to your life, so have one (or more) while you’re there!

Next, marvel at the views of this mountainous landscape and Lake Ashi with a ride on the **Hakone Ropeway**—a cable car that brings you up to Sounzan station, where the Hakone Gora Park is located.

12:00 PM Enjoy a relaxing outdoor pizza lunch at a local craft brewery, where we will be **joined by special guest Makoto Tanaka**—a Japanese manga artist who has been publishing work about Israel since 2022. After October 7th, Makoto focused on the hostages, working with the Israeli embassy to create anime drawings of Noa Argamani—her work calling to ‘Bring Them Home.’

1:30 PM After lunch, learn about one of the many facets of Japanese culture, with an immersive experience—**choose from one of the available options based on your interests.** Alternatively, you can take some time to relax at the hotel—a perfect opportunity to enjoy your own private onsen—and freshen up before dinner.

HELPFUL TIP: Those opting for an afternoon activity may not have time to rest or freshen up before dinner.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Understanding Ikebana: The Art of Japanese Flower Arrangement.

Ikebana, meaning “living flowers,” is a meditative Japanese art form that goes beyond simple floral arrangement. Emphasizing minimalism, balance, and harmony, it values asymmetry and empty space (*ma*) to create depth and meaning. Rooted in Zen and Shinto traditions, *Ikebana* highlights the natural beauty of seasonal flowers and branches, encouraging mindfulness and a deeper connection to nature.

Shodō: The Art of Japanese Calligraphy.

Shodō, which translates to “the way of writing,” is the traditional Japanese art of calligraphy, blending aesthetics, discipline, and mindfulness. More than just writing, it is a form of self-expression that emphasizes balance with the harmony between brush, ink, and paper. Rooted in *wabi-sabi*, *Shodō* embraces imperfection, while the concept of *ichigo ichie* reminds practitioners that each brushstroke is unique and unrepeatable.

Learn more about this traditional artform as you try your hand at Japanese calligraphy.

Discover Yosegi Zaiku: A Traditional Hakone Craft

Learn about *Yosegi Zaiku*—a traditional Japanese marquetry technique—at Maruyama Bussan facility. Originating during Japan’s Edo Period, this authentic and traditional style uses different grains, colours, and textures of wood to create mosaic designs. It is most famously used in Japanese puzzle “trick boxes,” but you will also see this technique used for other decorative items, such as jewelry boxes, vases, and frames.



6:00 PM Tonight, we will enjoy a **farewell dinner** together with a private chef at Hakone Public House and Brewery—a local craft brewery. To celebrate our last night, we will start with a traditional knife cutting ceremony. Watch as tuna is cut and prepared with a ceremonial sword—the techniques passed down through centuries—before enjoying some samples.

We will be joined by **Rabbi Andrew Scheer**, who will share insights into Jewish life in Japan and discuss Israel and Japan’s maintaining special relationship.

Rabbi Andrew Scheer was born and raised in Woodmere, New York. He studied at Yeshivat Sha’arei Mevasseret Zion and earned his BA in Jewish history from New York University. Between college and seminary, Andrew taught English in the Japanese countryside and Sunday school at the JCJ.

While studying at YCT, Andrew was a Wexner Graduate Fellow. He had the privilege of serving as rabbinic intern at Congregation Sherith Israel in Nashville, Tennessee, and Congregation Orach Chaim on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. Following ordination, Rabbi Scheer worked on Rikers Island as a Jewish Chaplain with the New York City Department of Correction. Andrew completed four units of clinical pastoral education at VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, after which he assumed the role of senior rabbi for the hospital.

HELPFUL TIP: Consider wearing smart-casual attire tonight, as we celebrate our final dinner together as a group.

OVERNIGHT IN HAKONE: THE GORA KARAKU

DAY 9

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

This morning, enjoy breakfast at the hotel before checking out and departing for Tokyo for return flights home to Canada. Your transportation back to the city will be organized by your return flight.

10:00 AM *Check out from hotel and depart Hakone.*

12:00 PM For those departing from Narita airport, a bus will bring you directly from our hotel in Hakone to the airport.

For those taking later flights, enjoy an afternoon in Ginza, where you will have time to walk around and grab something to eat before heading to Haneda airport.

2:00 PM *Depart Ginza for Haneda Airport.*



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