

A-LIST

# Mark Lakin's 13-Day Itinerary Around Japan

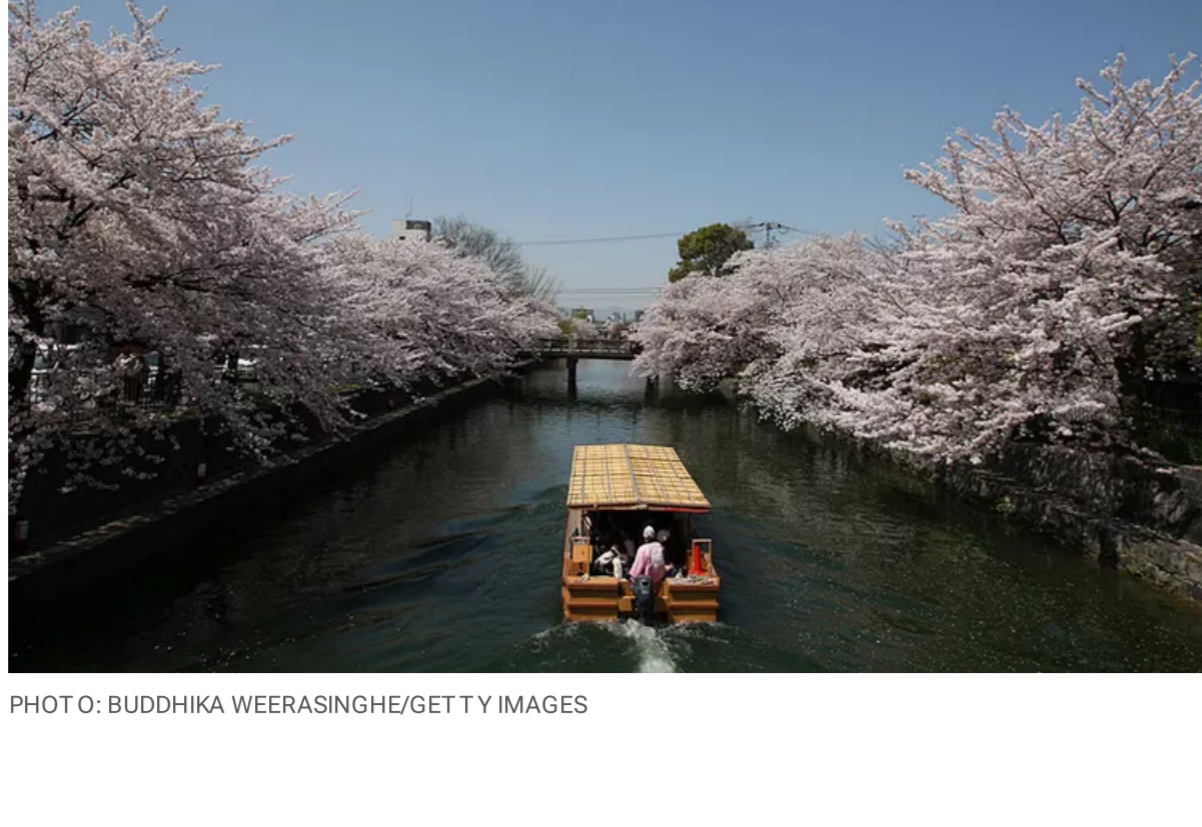
By [Mark Lakin](#) | Published on May 15, 2019

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[Mark Lakin](#) is a member of [Travel + Leisure's Travel Advisory Board](#) and the [A-List](#), a collection of the top travel advisors in the world, and can help plan your perfect getaway. Below is an example of the type of itineraries he creates. To work with Mark, you can contact him directly at [ml@thelegacytold.com](mailto:ml@thelegacytold.com).

## Day 1: Arrive in Tokyo

You will begin your trip in Tokyo. Depending on time of arrival, you may either choose to go directly to the hotel or have a half-day tour of the city with a private guide and driver.

In Tokyo, a small space paired with a fierce culture has allowed for one of the most impressive cities in the world. Tokyo renders urban chaos desirable as the most populous metropolitan area on earth, the gastronomic capital of the world, and as home to the biggest fish market, most expensive sake, best service, fashion, and riverboat entertainment on the planet. Lose yourself in a maze of Michelin-starred restaurants, pachinko parlors, quirky museums, imperial architecture, and bustling streets. Rediscover yourself in a deliciously juicy watermelon square and a short train ride to the mountains. Test the limits of your sensory stimulation and then let it all go — it's part of the experience.

**Stay:** AMAN Tokyo or The Peninsula Tokyo

### AMAN Tokyo

Set in the heart of Otemachi, AMAN Tokyo embodies the fusion of urban dynamism and traditional serenity that we love so much about Japan. AMAN features large luxury suites outfitted with traditional furnishings from washi paper slide doors to an ofuro or deep-soaking bathtub, a spa with eight different treatment rooms, a 1,200-bottle wine cellar, an in-house signature sake, and a private dining room perched right above Tokyo's sweeping skyline.

### The Peninsula Tokyo

Superbly located in the prestigious business district of Marunouchi, opposite the Imperial Palace and Hibiya Park and within minutes' walk of the shopping capital of Ginza, the Peninsula Tokyo offers commanding city views, luxurious comfort, sophisticated facilities, and extraordinary dining options. You will stay in one of five incredible suites — all boasting a sun-drenched private balcony, floor-to-ceiling windows, a grand piano, a dining room for 12 and quite frankly, whatever else your heart desires. We will also arrange for a private tea ceremony to be conducted in the comfort of your suite.

## Day 2: Tsukiji Tuna, Goma Fire Ritual & Private Tea Ceremony

Start Day 2 with a visit to the Tsukiji Market Tuna Auction. This will be followed by a fresh sushi breakfast inside the market — traditional sustenance for the day ahead. Your private guide will then take you to Fukagawa to observe the Goma Fire Ritual, complete with chanting monks, pounding drums, and a very energetic fire. You will then visit the nearby Fukagawa-Edo Museum. Next will be a tour of Akihabara, home to Japan's "otaku" subculture. You will have a private lesson with a working manga (comic) artist followed by a cup of tea at a Maid Café paired with a lunch of locally handmade ramen. Finish Day 2 with a private tea ceremony with a certified tea master. Tea is a huge part of Japanese culture. It has been around since the 12th century and was first enjoyed by imperial family and nobility.

**Stay:** AMAN Tokyo or The Peninsula Tokyo

## Day 3: 400-Year-Old Sake & Heritage Silk

You will visit a 400-year-old sake brewery just outside Tokyo and spend the day with a specialist. Enjoy a traditional lunch in a renovated farmhouse and later, stop by a generations-old working silk factory. Then, it's back to the city where you will meet up with a personal shopper who will take you to all the best boutiques around Harajuku and Shibuya. Dinner at one of Tokyo's top sushi restaurants is followed by a casual tour of the city's best cocktail bars.

**Stay:** AMAN Tokyo or The Peninsula Tokyo



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## Day 4: Samurai Swords & Sumo Tournaments

Meet up with the world's leading specialist in Samurai swords for a private visit to the Sword Museum. From there, you will visit one of Japan's renowned sword makers in his personal studio and witness how one of these amazing works of art is created. After lunch, we will organize for a private lesson in iaido, the art of drawing and controlling a sword. Later that night, you will have the incredibly unique opportunity to attend 1 of only 6 professional sumo tournaments held annually. Watch these giant athletes compete from your premium box seats.

**Stay:** AMAN Tokyo or The Peninsula Tokyo

## Day 5: Helicopter Over Mt. Fuji, Transfer to Hakone & Gora Kadan Ryokan

Your private helicopter awaits. First fly over Tokyo before heading 40 minutes south to circle Mt. Fuji. Land and explore the area, which includes one-of-a-kind museums, beautiful gardens, and gorgeous scenery. Enjoy a private motorboat ride on Lake Ashinoko.

**Stay:** Gora Kadan Ryokan

Your accommodation for the night will be Gora Kadan — considered to be Japan's ultimate onsen-ryokan or luxury hot spring inn. Relax with a soak in your private outdoor bath and a visit to the spa. Dinner will be served in your room — a fabulous traditional Kaiseki banquet.

## Day 6: Transfer to Kyoto: Temples, Drums & Geisha

Transfer to Kyoto by shinkansen or bullet train. You will spend the next 4 nights here, all booked at The Ritz Carlton. Upon arrival, you will be met by your guide and driver who will escort you to a completely private temple visit where the head Abbot will teach you a bit about Japanese Buddhism. Musically gifted or not, you will then be taken to your private taiko drumming lesson. Pounding on a massive wooden drum is the ultimate stress reliever, a relatively intense workout, and a whole lot of fun. Later, a private evening with geisha, including a delicious meal and plenty of sake. **Stay:** The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto

This property has been described as a modern day luxury ryokan, combining century-old traditions with the world class hospitality that the Ritz-Carlton is known for. Perfectly located at the heart of Kyoto, the Ritz affords expansive panoramic views of the Kamogawa River and Higashiyama mountains. So, retire to your culturally inspired suite with floor-to-ceiling windows and traditional Japanese motifs, relax, and enjoy the mesmerizing and imperial purple sunset.

## Day 7: Bamboo Forest & Private Cooking Lesson

Wake early and enjoy a peaceful jirikisha ride through a deep bamboo forest before a locally-prepared breakfast. You will then be taken to Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavilion and one of the city's UNESCO sites) well before the masses arrive. From there you will head to Saihoji (the Moss Temple). Then, it's a lunch of flaming ramen at Kyoto's hottest noodle bar followed by a private tour of Hosoo, a 350-year old textile company that once wove fabrics for the Imperial Family. Your guide will take you to Kyoto's best shops for high-quality kimonos and collectibles. End the day with a private cooking lesson with one of the city's top chefs.

**Stay:** The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto

## Day 8: Japanese Ceramics & Miho Museum

Your guide for the day will be a leading expert in Japanese ceramics. You will first be taken to the phenomenal Miho Museum in Shiga. From there, you will visit several working artisans in their homes and studios — a personalized experience allowing you to both observe and learn traditional and creative processes. Your day will end at your guide's home, which also serves as a gallery for the best working potters in all of Japan. As a serious sake fan, he will arrange for a tasting of several local brands for you to enjoy.

**Stay:** The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto



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## Day 9: Eight UNESCO Heritage Sites & Kasuga Taisha Lanterns

Head south for Fushimi Inari Taisha, a lovely mountain shrine encircled by thousands of vermilion torii, or gates. Continue south for the stunning Byodo-In Temple.

Nara is next — home to no less than eight UNESCO heritage sites, including several of the world's largest wooden buildings. Here, you may enjoy strolling the grounds in traditional Japanese dress, an option available to you from several local shops. You can also visit Nara's deer park, the stomping grounds for over 1200 friendly deer that will happily eat right from your hands! End the day with a truly rare and unique experience: a private ceremony at Kasuga Taisha. The main gates will close to the general public and the monks will light hundreds of individual lanterns. This ceremony is only performed for the shrine's most important guests. Dinner will be at one of Kyoto's top restaurants.

**Stay:** The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto

## Day 10: Transfer to Okinawa & Ocean Adventures

On Day 10 you will fly to Japan's southernmost post, the island of Ishigaki, then transfer via boat to the tiny paradise of Taketomi. Here, you will unwind and enjoy a variety of ocean activities — snorkel, scuba, kayak, sail or simply read on the beach. You will spend the next 3 nights in an ocean-facing suite at Hoshinoya Taketomi.

**Stay:** Hoshinoya Taketomi

Taketomi is graced by clear blue waters, breathtaking skies, white sands, and red-tiled roofs. Hoshinoya Taketomi is a luxury experience that harmonizes with the surrounding tradition and soothing ocean setting — it is the perfect accommodation for the modern traveler.

## Day 11: Island Hopping & Indigenous Cats

On Day 11, you can either continue to relax on the beach or meet up with a guide and explore some of the area's cultural highlights. These include visits to local artisan villages, spectacular hikes, trips to neighboring islands to catch a glimpse of the rare indigenous Iriomote Cat, or a visit to the local awamori (alcohol made from long-grain rice) distillery.

**Stay:** Hoshinoya Taketomi

## Day 12: At Your Leisure & Hoshinoya Taketomi

Your last full day in paradise. Once again, you may choose how to spend it — at your leisure or touring the area.

**Stay:** Hoshinoya Taketomi

## Day 13: Depart Japan

Today you'll catch a flight home from Ishigaki.