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DR. STEVE SZARKA & Doctors-on-Tour present a
CME & CULTURAL TOUR OF JAPAN
“THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN”

MAY 18 – JUNE 1, 2024



The Organizers...

Doctors-on-Tour

Doctors-on-Tour was created in 2000 and specializes in offering ecological, cultural, gastronomical and adventure travel to exotic destinations for physicians who want to combine learning and travelling. Our programs offer targeted educational programs offering updates on current topics of interest together with meetings and discussions with local health care representatives to specifically discuss common medical developments in, and challenges facing, the local health care systems in both Canada and the country where the meetings and discussions are being located. This also includes in-depth tours of hospital facilities (both public and private) in order to meet with local medical practitioners and review, and compare, facilities, techniques and practices on a first hand basis. We offer programs in several worldwide locations including to such diverse and intriguing areas as **South America (Brazil, Chile/Argentina, Ecuador/Peru), Africa (Kenya/Tanzania, Morocco, South Africa, Zanzibar, Kilimanjaro climb), India, Bhutan, China, Japan, South East Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos & Bali), Malaysia/Singapore, New Zealand and Europe (Eastern Europe, Iceland, Spain).**

Additional information, including detailed program brochures downloadable in pdf format and recent testimonials, can be found at www.doctorsontour.ca. The company is a licensed retail travel organization under The Travel Industry Act of Ontario thereby affording complete protection of all monies paid prior to departure. (TICO registration no. 50009110).

Contact us at - tel: 416-231-8466; toll free: 1-855-DOC-TOUR (362-8687); fax: 1-888-612-1459

e: info@doctorsontour.ca

Dr. Steve Szarka B.Eng., M.Eng., M.D., C.C.F.P. - Hamilton, On.

Dr. Steve Szarka is a family physician with a private practice in Hamilton, Ontario. His undergraduate education in both Electrical and Computer Engineering (B.Eng, M.Eng) and Medicine (M.D) was also obtained at McMaster University in Hamilton. In Hamilton, he helped establish, and was the Lead Physician for, one of the first Primary Care Reform Networks (PCN) in Ontario. He has also served on Steering Committees for the establishment of the first Family Health Team in Ontario, and to help establish protocols for the Family Health Team in the Hamilton Area relating to the management of chronic care diseases as it pertains to diabetes.



He currently holds the position of Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Family Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University and is a Past-President for the Hamilton Academy of Medicine. He developed a special interest in phlebology and sat on the board of directors for the Canadian Society of Phlebology. This has been a challenging position that has allowed him to interact and teach his colleagues in this field, both here in Canada and as an invited speaker all over the world.

This is Dr. Szarka's ninth venture with Doctors-on-Tour having led previous CME programs to Eastern Europe (2015, 2017), South East Asia (2016, 2020), Ecuador, the Galapagos and Peru (2016), South Africa (2018), Chile & Argentina (2019) and Morocco 2022.

Dr. Szarka may be contacted at –

e: szarkas@mcmaster.ca, Tel: 1-905-648-3322

Just a few of the client comments from our inaugural May 2023 Japan CME Tour...

"The Japan experience ranks among the very best offered by DoT - seamlessly blending the country's rich history and culture with outstanding cuisines and activities. The farewell Kimono dinner with Geisha entertainment was particularly noteworthy as well as the beauty of the Five Lakes region, majesty of Mt. Fuji, the ryokan experience and the many beautiful Japanese gardens and historic sites! Outstanding experience!"

Dr. Bruno Salena, Ancaster, On.- Japan, 2023

"We enjoyed this trip very much and the effort all you put into getting it together. We enjoyed the cultural aspect of the food. The guides were superb. We appreciate our Canadian colleagues and felt we were warmly welcomed. Thanks for putting on an A++++ trip".

Dr. David Trask, Medford, OR – Japan, 2023

"Great organization. Fantastic content with a well-balanced program. The entire group was very cordial. We all had a great time immersed in the Japanese culture and food. Thanks Doctors-on-Tour – a great way to transform the necessary (CME) to a pleasant activity."

Dr. Michel Laverdiere, Pointe Claire, QC – Japan, 2023

The Destination... JAPAN

Hardly a day goes by that you don't hear something about Japan, whether the subject is trade, travel, cuisine, the arts, or Japanese imports ranging from Sony and Toyota to karaoke and anime. Yet Japan remains something of an enigma to people in the Western world. What best describes this Asian nation? Is it the giant producer of cars and an entire array of sleek electronic goods that compete favorably with the best in the West? Or is it still the land of *geisha* and *bonsai*, the punctilious tea ceremony, and the delicate art of flower arrangement? Has it become, in its outlook and popular culture, a country more Western than Asian? Or has it retained its unique ancient traditions while forging a central place in the contemporary post-industrialized world?

In fact, Japan is an intricate blend of East and West, a land of contrasts, and our unique itinerary embraces these, combining exciting and innovative contemporary Japan with its traditional legacies. From imperial castles to snow-capped mountains and Shinto shrines to modern boulevards, futuristic bullet trains speeding by kimono-clad ladies and soccer players honing their skills while sumo wrestlers train nearby, this is Japan.

Start in **Tokyo**, the capital since the late 1800's and an endlessly rewarding city to explore. Visit the Meiji Shrine dedicated to a Japanese Emperor who died in 1912. Close by is Harajuku, the uniquely colourful youth fashion quarter with many bargains to be had. Pay your respects at the Imperial Palace and take a river cruise to the old quarter of Asakusa, home of the city's oldest Geisha district and colourful street markets.

From Tokyo, drive to **Hakone National Park**, a region of lakes and spectacular scenery including a Japanese icon, Mount Fuji best viewed from the Komagatake cable car. Stay in a wellness retreat where you can relax in a traditional Japanese *onsen* (natural hot spring water).

Next is the alpine town of Takayama nestled in the Hida Mountains of the Japan Alps National Park the journey to which will provide your first experience on a *shinkansen* (bullet train). There's something magical about the streets of **Takayama**, with its elegant historic district dating back to the Edo period including sake breweries, colorful street markets and places to sample the region's famous Hida beef.

Stop at the UNESCO town of **Shirakawago**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses en route to **Kanazawa**, an Edo period city that showcases Japanese arts, crafts, and culture at its finest. Here, you'll visit the famous castle, and the Nagamachi Samurai District, along with Kenrokuen Garden, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan as well as participating in gold leaf painting which the area is famous for.

Continue West on the shinkasen to re-born **Hiroshima** in western Honshu and visit the sobering Peace Memorial Park as well as to neighboring **Miyajima**, a picturesque jewel of an island in the Seto Inland Sea considered to be one of Japan's most scenic spots with its famous "floating" Itsukushima Shrine dating back to the 6th century.

Your final destination is **Kyoto**, Japan's most beautiful city with 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites befitting of its status as the reigning cultural capital of Japan. Explore a sample of Japan's most famous and beautiful temples and castles and preserved historical districts with their narrow streets and specialty shops where local crafts have been passed down over the generations. Experience traditional Japanese healing practices firsthand with a *Zazen meditation* and *shiatsu* session as your tour comes to an end with a special dinner enhanced with a private *Geisha* and *Maiko* performance. If Tokyo is the door to Japan's future, Kyoto is a window on its mysterious past and is the highlight for many visitors to Japan.

Japan slowly draws you into its eclectic culture and charm, revealing incredible moments every step of the way...

Additional info can be found at –

- www.japan.travel/en - Official JNTO (Japan National Tourist Office) site

The JNTO also has a useful smartphone app ("Japan Official Travel App")

The Academic Program (approximately 15 CME hours) ...

The **detailed program itinerary below** provides information on the various medical facilities that we will be visiting to learn about the healthcare system in Japan and fittingly, recognizing that Japan is such a land of contrasts, this will include a focus on both **leading-edge medical technology** and **traditional medical practices**. There will also be a series of lectures throughout the tour from both local physicians and Canadian presenters together with interactive discussions. Complete information on the individual medical topics being presented will be included with your pre-departure documentation.

- **Academic Conference** in Tokyo with presentations by Canadian & Japanese medical experts & interactive discussions on current medical issues
- Visit **Silver-Wing Shintomi Facility**, a Special Nursing Home for the Elderly where participants will learn about the use of **Cyberdyne (robotic medical) devices** (Tokyo)
- Presentation on **acupuncture** (Kanawaza)
- Visit to a **local hospital** in Hiroshima to learn about the Japanese healthcare system and meet with local doctors.
- Introduction to **Zazen meditation**, with the session being led by a Buddhist monk (Kyoto)
- **Shiatsu initiation** with a Shiatsu Master (Kyoto)

In addition, any physician who would like to make a short presentation at the Academic Conference should register their interest by completing the relevant section of the program registration form and the **Group Medical Director, Dr. Steve Szarka** (e: szarkas@mcmaster.ca, Tel: 1-905-648-3322), will contact you directly.

A certificate of attendance will be provided to all attendees of the Academic Program.

Tour highlights...

- Immerse yourself in the ancient and modern cultures of Japan
- Learn the art of *bonzai* with a private bonzai master
- Participate in a traditional *green tea ceremony* with a Buddhist priest in a private temple
- Wander the *Geisha* district of Asakusa and visit Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple, Senso-ji
- Ride the Komagatake ropeway (cable car) for a breathtaking view of Mount Fuji in the Hakone National Park
- Stay in a *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn) to experience traditional Japanese lifestyle including a therapeutic bath in your private *onsen* (hot tub with mineral content)
- Taste legendary Hida beef and sip *sake* at a local brewery in Takayama surrounded by the Japan Alps
- Stroll through one of the country's top 3 gardens at Kenroku-en Garden in Kanawaza and learn about *Samurai* culture
- Be humbled by the lessons of history in Hiroshima at the Peace Memorial Park and the ruined Atomic Dome (UNESCO)
- Delve into Kyoto, the marvelous cultural capital of Japan and home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Thrill to the speed of the *Shinkansen* (bullet train) as you travel between the various regions of Japan. Quickly.
- Experience a special *Geisha* and *Maiko* (apprentice Geisha) performance while dressed in a *kimono* at your Farewell Dinner



The Itinerary...

DAY 1 – May 18, 2024 (Saturday) – Depart Toronto

Depart Toronto for your flight to Tokyo, Japan.

Specific flight times / routing will be forwarded upon registration.

DAY 2 – May 19: Arrive Tokyo (D)



A business and cultural megacenter that is home to tens of millions of people, **Tokyo**, the capital of Japan, is also the crossroads where the Japanese interact with citizens from all over the world. And, due to the major earthquake in 1923 and the destruction from the 2nd World War, many of the city's buildings are modern and contemporary architecturally. The media love to focus on Tokyo's vibrant fashion, robot restaurants, maid cafes and the passionate uberfans known as otaku. But, as fast-paced as Tokyo's innovation is, the metropolis is just as devoted to preserving tradition through its historical gardens, shrines and temples. Discover graceful tea ceremonies and gardens awash with springtime cherry blossoms, a world apart from skyscraper-dotted Shinjuku or trend-obsessed Harajuku.

Tokyo stuns with its contrasts — one minute you're lost in Shiodome's skyscraper jungle, the next in quiet contemplation beside a carp pond in the Zen-like Hamarikyu Gardens. Too vast to grasp, this city is all about delighting in the details — whether you're watching locals retrieve their fortunes from wooden drawers at Buddhist Senso-ji Temple or enjoying springtime cherry trees in bloom in Ueno Park, home to the treasure-trove Tokyo National Museum. Across the color-changing Rainbow Bridge lies artificial island Odaiba's futuristic cityscape and Edo-style hot springs.

Known for its extreme attention to detail, Japan's capital is home to some of the best Japanese food in the country, with 234 Michelin-starred restaurants—more than any other city. Whatever your cultural interests are, Tokyo is likely to have you covered. Home to many world-class art galleries and museums, staggeringly diverse nightlife options and cutting-edge technology, you'll never be stuck for things to do or places to go in Tokyo.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kanto/tokyo/>

Afternoon arrival in Tokyo, where you will be met by your local Japanese Tour Escort who will be with you for the duration of your tour. During the transfer to your hotel, your Tour Escort will give you some brief information about your hotel, its surrounding and about Tokyo as well as explaining your program in the city for the following days. You will have some free time to recuperate from your transpacific flight before your welcome dinner at a typical Japanese restaurant.

Welcome Dinner at a typical Japanese restaurant, a first taste of **Kaiseki cuisine** in Tokyo with Tofu specialty.

Kaiseki or kaiseki-ryōri is a traditional multi-course Japanese meal and is seen as a type of art form that balances the taste, texture, appearance, and colors of food. Finished dishes are beautifully presented on plates that are chosen to enhance both the appearance and the seasonal theme of the meal. Originally presented to the royal noble classes, kaiseki is the embodiment of "omotenashi," which means wholehearted hospitality.

Overnight at hotel in Tokyo.

DAY 3 – May 20: Tokyo (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, the group will split for separate activities.

Physicians – Visit Silver-Wing Shintomi Facility, a Special Nursing Home for the Elderly where participants will learn about the use of Cyberdyne (robotic medical) devices.

https://www.silver-w.jp/index_shintomi.html

<https://widerimage.reuters.com/story/ageing-japan-robots-role-in-future-of-elder-care>

CYBERDYNE is a robotic medical device manufacturer, which utilizes Cybernics, a new domain of interdisciplinary research centered on cybernetics, mechatronics, and informatics, which integrates neuroscience, robotics and “kansei” engineering. Ther company was established in June 2004 as a university venture to solve various social problems facing the super-aged society led by Dr. Yoshiyuki Sankai, University of Tsukuba, Japan. It utilizes the Robot Suit HAL®, which was developed as an application of “Cybernics”, in the fields of medicine, caregiving, welfare and labor.

There are now almost 20 Robocare Centres throughout Japan utilizing this technology which is now also available in Europe and North America – see the following link where UBC researchers have recently (Sep 2023) introduced AI powered 'social robots' to a West Vancouver seniors facility.

<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/ubc-researcher-introduces-ai-powered-social-robots-to-west-vancouver-seniors-facility-1.6569947>

<https://www.cyberdyne.jp/english/>



Partners will visit Hamarikyu, a Japanese garden that once served as a private villa of a powerful feudal lord during the Edo period. Its wide collection of seasonal flowers makes it one of the most visited gardens in Tokyo, but what makes it more attractive is its teahouse called Nakajima-no-Ochaya.

Lunch will be at a local restaurant.

After lunch, head to the pier to take a **Scenic River Cruise** to see Tokyo from another perspective. The cruise will end at Asakusa Pier.

Afterwards, head to **Asakusa**, a part of Tokyo's *shitamachi* or old town and home to the city's oldest Geisha district - *Geisha are performers; classically trained in a range of skills including the art of conversation, playing instruments like the shamisen, drinking games, poetry recital and dance. These skills are practiced and honed for years in training and are employed for entertainment at high-end events and dinners.*

Asakusa is also home to **Senso-ji**, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple which offers plenty to see including the bright red Kaminarimon Gate, a statue of the god of thunder, and a five-story pagoda.

The streets around **Senso-ji** feature many traditional shops and are a delight to wander through. As you head towards the main hall and **Asakusa Shrine**, you will pass through **Nakamise-dori** Street, a commercial alley filled with small shops that sell local sweets, handmade figurines, and colorful souvenirs.



Evening at leisure.

Overnight at hotel in Tokyo.

DAY 4 – May 21: Tokyo (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, the group will split for separate activities.

Physicians - Morning medical conference featuring local and Canadian speakers.

Partners will visit the Bonsai workshop of **Kunio Kobayashi**, a world famous Bonsai master where you will have a private lesson of Bonsai.

***Bonsai** is the art of growing miniature potted trees. In Japanese culture these graceful creations are often displayed in living rooms as symbols of the beauty of nature. It is a true art form that requires special techniques such as pruning, wiring, fertilizing, and watering. People not only enjoy its visual appearance but also appreciate the effort put into their creation. In the Edo period, bonsai arose as a popular hobby among the people, and it is still a popular pastime for enthusiasts all over the world. Because people of high birth, such as the imperial family, loved bonsai, it has come to be considered more art than simply a hobby.*

Kunio Kobayashi, world-famous' Bonsai master runs his school and museum in Tokyo's Edogawa ward. At the age of 28 he dedicated his life to Bonsai and gained the required skills due to self-study. Growing up in a nursery he already was familiar with the beauty of plants and nature, but one encounter set him off his determined path in life. During an exhibition he spotted a Japanese white pine formed as a Bonsai tree. Fascinated by its elegant shape showing life's dignity, the young Kobayashi decided immediately to start creating such graceful trees himself. "Bonsai is art" and can be described with the three words of individuality (個性 *kosei*), harmony (調和 *chowa*) and elegance (品位 *hini*).

http://kunio-kobayashi.com/en/kunio_kobayashi.html



Lunch will be at a typical Izakaya restaurant, **Gonpachi Nishi-Azabu**, on the corner of Nishi-Azabu Crossing, is well known for being the location of former-US President Bush and former-Prime Minister Koizumi's Izakaya Summit as well as its scene in Quentin Tarantino's 2004 film Kill Bill. Serving typical Japanese food such as fresh soba noodles, grilled skewers and tempura, Gonpachi Nishi-Azabu's nostalgic atmosphere brings you back to a Japan of a bygone era.

After lunch, you will be taken to **Meiji Shrine**, built in 1920 and dedicated to the first modern Emperor and Empress of Japan at that time. Surrounding the shrine is a spacious park and gladed forest with some 120,000 trees of 365 different species, and attractive paths along which to stroll, an oasis in the middle of this vast city. You may be fortunate to see a traditional wedding ceremony take place on the grounds of the shrine with the whole wedding party often dressed in traditional costumes.

Outside of Meiji Shrine you will find **Harajuku**, the shopping haven for all fashionistas and the popular meeting place for teenagers who are usually in eccentric clothing. The landmark of Harajuku is Takeshita Street, a 400-meter long alley filled with boutiques, shops, and cafes.

Neighboring Harajuku is **Omotesando**, commonly referred to as Tokyo's Champs-Elysee. This broad, tree-lined avenue features a number of fashion flagship stores designed by internationally renowned architects like TOD's Omotesando, designed by Toyo Ito.



Afterwards, make a quick stop at Shibuya to see the iconic **Shibuya Crossing**, one of Tokyo's most recognizable sights pictured in countless films and magazines. During its busiest times, an estimated 1,000 to 2,500 people forge their way across this intersection every two minutes, enough to quickly fill up a football stadium. The phenomenon gave rise to its nickname "scramble," as pedestrians cross from all directions.

Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Tokyo.

DAY 5 – May 22: Tokyo - Hakone (B, L, D)

Japan's **Hakone** is a region of spectacular natural beauty, home to hot springs, nature and art museums. The town of Hakone is situated in the southwest of Kanagawa Prefecture in the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. It is famous both inside and outside of Japan as a resort area brimming with natural hot springs of the highest quality, mountains, lakes, interesting historical sites and breathtaking views of Mount Fuji.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kanto/kanagawa/hakone-and-around/>

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, journey by bus to the Mount Fuji Five Lake area and the discovery of Hakone, part of the **Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park**, less than one hundred kilometers from Tokyo.

Your first stop is at the **Hakone Ropeway Souzan Station**, from where you will board the Ropeway to Owakudani, an area famous for its sulphurous fumes and hot springs. Here you'll also have the chance to try Kuro-tamago, literally "black eggs", which is a hardboiled egg cooked in the sulphuric hot springs. According to local lore, eating one egg will add seven years to you!



Afterwards board a sightseeing **cruise along Lake Ashinoko**, a lake that was formed after a volcanic eruption that took place more than 3,000 years ago.

Lunch at a local restaurant where you will sample specialties of the region.

After lunch, ride the **ropeway Komagatake** and have a breathtaking view of Fuji. When visibility is good, panoramic views of Lake Ashinoko and Mount Fuji can be enjoyed from the ropeway's upper station. A short walk away, on the actual peak of Komagatake, stands the **Hakone Shrine Mototsumiya**, the original Hakone Shrine, whose main site is now located at the more easily accessible shores of Lake Ashinoko in Moto Hakone.

Throughout the day you will have the chance to get a glimpse of Mt. Fuji, however please keep in mind that she is a notoriously shy mountain and it needs to be a clear day for you to see her splendor.



Continue to your hotel in Hakone Gora to enjoy your private en-suite *onsen* and have some rest until dinner.

An **onsen** is the local word for “natural hot springs” There are many types of hot springs, distinguished by the minerals dissolved in the water. Different minerals provide different health benefits, and all hot springs are supposed to have a relaxing effect on your body and mind. Hot spring baths come in many varieties, indoors and outdoors, traditional and modern including as an added amenity in several hotels and ryokans across Japan.

Dinner and overnight at hotel.

DAY 6 – May 23: Hakone - Takayama (B, L)



Located in the Hida Mountains (part of the Japan Alps National Park in the Gifu Prefecture), and with a population of 95,000, the alpine town of **Takayama** (often known as “Little Kyoto”) is surrounded by 3,000m peaks and is situated along a river on a wide plateau. It was founded in the 16th century by Lord Kanamori, who selected the site because of the impregnable position afforded by the surrounding mountains. Modeled after Kyoto but also with strong ties to Edo (Tokyo), Takayama borrowed from both cultural centers in developing its own architecture, food, and crafts, all well preserved today thanks to centuries of isolation. With a rich supply of timber provided by surrounding forests, its carpenters were legendary, creating not only beautifully crafted traditional merchants' homes in Takayama but also the Imperial Palace and temples in Kyoto.

Today, Takayama boasts a delightful and elegant historic district, called San-machi Suji, with homes of classical design typical of 18th-century Hida which will make you feel as though you've stepped back in time. The streets are narrow and clean and are flanked on both sides by tiny canals of running water, which in centuries past were useful for fire prevention, washing clothes, and dumping winter snow, but which now give the town its distinct character. Rising from the canals are one and two-story homes and shops of gleaming dark wood with overhanging roofs, latticed windows and slats of wood play games of light and shadow in the white of the sunshine.

With its quaint old character, great shopping (including a lively city market), delightful local cuisine and many museums, Takayama offers a low-key, rustic experience of old Japan developed from its feudal history and its important agricultural roots. As you walk down the streets, you'll also notice huge cedar balls hanging from the eaves in front of several shops, indicating one of Takayama's sake breweries. Altogether, there are six of them in Takayama, most small affairs. Go inside, sample the sake, and watch the men stirring rice in large vats. There are also a surprising number of museums, most housed in traditional homes and filled with historical relics and antiques of Takayama's past. From a culinary perspective, it is also one of the few places where you can enjoy Hida beef, a brand of domestic wagyu that rivals even Kobe beef.

Just a short distance from Takayama is the historic village of Shirakawa-go, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site for its unique thatched-roof farmhouses.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/tokai/gifu/takayama-and-around/>

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, depart Hakone for your next destination, Takayama, a small town nestled high in the **Hida Alpine region**.

En route you will stop at **Shiraito Falls**. Ranked among the most beautiful waterfalls in Japan, the 150 meter wide cascade is fed by the volcano's spring water and flows off the edge of a 20 meter high cliff in thin white streams that resemble hanging threads of silk - hence its name, literally "White Thread Waterfall". The base of the waterfall is easily accessible from the road via a walking trail in just a few minutes. From the end of the Warring States period to the early Edo period, it was considered to be the place where Hasegawa Kakuye, who is said to be the founder of Fujiko, trained, and it became a place of pilgrimage and training for people centered on Fujiko.



After **Shiraito**, head to Shin Fuji Station to catch the *Shinkansen* (bullet train) to Nagoya.

Change at Nagoya for the next leg which is on the Limited Express train Wide View, which offers one of the most scenic train journeys in Japan.

How do the Japanese travel on Shinkansen? They generally buy in advance a "Bento box" for their meal which is the experience that you will also have today for lunch as you will ride the Shinkansen just after Middy.

Japan's high speed trains (bullet trains) are called **Shinkansen** (新幹線) and are operated by Japan Railways (JR).

They connect Japan's main islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido which are served by a network of high speed train lines that connect Tokyo with most of the country's major cities. Running at speeds of up to 320 km/h, the shinkansen is known for punctuality (most trains depart on time to the second), comfort (relatively silent cars with spacious, always forward facing seats), safety (no fatal accidents in its history) and efficiency.

The Shinkansen network consists of multiple lines, among which the Tokaido Shinkansen (Tokyo - Nagoya - Kyoto - Osaka) is the oldest and most popular. All shinkansen lines (except the Akita and Yamagata Shinkansen) run on tracks that are exclusively built for and used by shinkansen trains. Most lines are served by multiple train categories, ranging from the fastest category that stops only at major stations to the slowest category that stops at every station along the way.

You will arrive in **Takayama** late afternoon and be transferred to your accommodation and have free time until the next day.

Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Takayama.

DAY 7 – May 24: Takayama (B)



Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, discover the two morning markets that are held in **Takayama** every day - the **Miyagawa** Market along the Miyagawa River in the old town, and the **Jinya-mae** Market in front of the Takayama Jinya. The stands sell local crafts, snacks and farm products such as vegetables, pickles and flowers. There is typically a pleasant atmosphere around the markets, as tourists and locals' alike saunter from stall to stall purchasing goods and food and talking.

Then discover the southern half of the old town, especially the **Sannomachi Street**, which is extremely well preserved with many old homes, shops, coffee houses together with several old **sake breweries**, some of which have been in business for centuries and which can be recognized by *sugidama* (balls made of cedar branches) hung over their entrances.

Lunch will be free at leisure in Takayama.



After lunch, visit the **Takayama Matsuri Yatai Kaikan**, a hall next to **Sakurayama Hachiman Shrine**. The elaborately decorated floats are several hundred years' old and beautiful examples of Takayama's legendary craftsmanship.

Adjacent to the Matsuri Yatai Kaikan lies the **Nikkokan**, a spacious hall containing impressive models of the different precincts of **Toshogu Shrine** in Nikko, one of the most ornate and celebrated shrines in the country. The miniature models are beautifully intricate and are accompanied by short explanations in Japanese and English.



To finish the day, visit the nearby **Kusakabe Heritage House** (Kusakabe Mingeikan), one of Takayama's oldest merchant homes open to the public. Its former residents, the Kusakabe family, used to be successful money lenders.



Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Takayama.

DAY 8 – May 25: Takayama - Shirakawago - Kanazawa (B, L)



Located between the Sea of Japan and the mountains on Japan's main island Honshu, **Kanazawa** (population 460,000) is the gateway to the rugged, sea-swept Noto Peninsula and is the prefectural capital of the Ishikawa province.

Kanazawa first gained notoriety about 500 years ago, when a militant Buddhist sect joined with peasant fanatics to overthrow the feudal lord and establish its own autonomous government, an event unprecedented in Japanese history. The independent republic survived almost 100 years before it was attacked by an army of Oda Nobunaga, who was trying to unite Japan at a time when civil wars wracked the nation. Kanazawa was subsequently granted to one of Nobunaga's retainers, Maeda Toshiie, who constructed a castle and transformed the small community into a thriving castle town. The Kaga clan (Maeda family) continued to rule over Kanazawa for the next 300 years, amassing wealth in the form of land and rice and encouraging development of the arts. Throughout the Tokugawa shogunate, the Maedas remained the second-most powerful family in Japan and controlled the largest domain in the country. During the prosperous and relatively peaceful Edo period (1603-1867), a vibrant culture of fine arts and craftsmanship evolved, including Kutani ware, Yuzen silk dyeing, lacquerware, and noh theater, and Kanazawa became the cultural capital of the West Coast of Japan, rivaling Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo). Artists and craftsman from all over Japan came to settle in Kanazawa, perfecting a culture unique to Kanazawa over the centuries.

It was the second-largest city (after Kyoto) to escape bombing during World War II, and much of the old city has been left intact, including a district of former samurai mansions, old geisha quarters, Edo-Era canals, and tiny narrow streets that run crookedly without rhyme or reason (apparently to confuse any enemies foolish enough to attack). In Kanazawa today, you will find traditional and modern art and architecture and a vast range of Japanese crafts such as Kaga-yuzen (a silk dyeing technique used on kimono), Ohi ware (austere tea ceremony bowls), maki-e lacquerware and Kutani-yaki ceramics. There are also sword-smithing, geisha and samurai districts, and one of the most beautiful and acclaimed traditional landscape gardens in Japan, the Kenroku-en Garden. The city contains museums and workshops on everything from gold leaf to samurai. In fact, the name Kanazawa literally means marsh of gold, and today the city supplies 99 percent of Japan's gold leaf.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/hokuriku-shinetsu/ishikawa/kanazawa-and-around/>

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, travel by coach to **Shirakawago**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its *gassho-zukuri* farmhouses. Gassho-zukuri means "constructed like hands in prayer," which is represented through the farmhouses' steep thatched roofs. This architectural style developed over many generations – the roofs were constructed without any nails and are intricately designed to withstand large amounts of snow. These houses are private homes of the locals, but some are open to the public, such as **Wada House**, a legacy left behind by the Wada Family who used to be the richest family and village leader in Ogimachi. Look around and be fascinated by the culture and history of the village.

Lunch at a Thatched Roof House in Shirakawago where you can taste the delicious regional cuisine.



After lunch, continue by coach from Shirakawago to Kanazawa and enjoy seeing rural Japanese scenery such as the manmade **Miboro Dam** and the **Hakusan Mountains**.

Arriving at Kanazawa, you will visit the **Yasue Gold Leaf Museum**. This museum focuses on and exhibits gold beating tools and artistic handicraft articles collected by Komei Yasue, a famous gold leaf artisan where you can see the manufacturing process of gold leaves. The museum exhibits a large number of works including folding screens, Noh costumes, Kutani porcelain, a Kanazawa Buddhist altar, Kaga lacquer work, and Kaga incrustation work. Afterwards, you will have a **gold leaf painting activity**, a traditional art in Kanazawa that you will bring back home with you.





Gold leaf is a decorative material that has been used for thousands of years and is commonly seen on picture frames and used in architecture (such as the Statue of Liberty and several state capitol domes), on furniture. Illuminated manuscripts, and religious iconography also make use of gold leaf. It gives a warm golden glow in low light and is brilliant in sunlight. Gold leaf, or kinpaku, is gold that has been rolled flat by a machine and then beaten into a very thin square sheet that averages about 0.12 microns in thickness. For comparison, copier paper is around 130 microns, and human hair around 60 micron. Kanazawa's association with gold leaf began around 400 years ago and today it is the sole remaining production hub of the coveted craft with the city laying proud claim to supplying 99% of the country's domestic gold leaf market.

Evening at leisure.

Overnight at hotel in Kanawaza.

DAY 9 – May 26: Kanawaza (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, visit the pristine **Kenroku-en Garden**, Japan's most celebrated landscape garden. Open to the public since 1874, the name Kenrokuen literally means "Garden of the Six Sublimities", referring to spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and broad views, which according to Chinese landscape theory are the six essential attributes that make up a perfect garden. A stroll around Kenrokuen will help with understanding this landscape theory as the grounds are teeming with water features, bridges, trees, flowers, stones, viewpoints and hidden nooks to discover.

The garden offers amazing seasonal views all year round and includes the oldest water fountain in the country as well as a large villa that used to be the retirement home of one of the richest clans in Kanazawa. The garden is also home to historic teahouses, a legacy of the importance of tea ceremony in Kanazawa during the Edo period (1603–1867). These include Yugao-tei, Kenrokuen's oldest surviving structure, built in 1774. Shigure-tei, a more recent addition, was built in 2000 in the style of the garden's original pavilion.

Adjacent to the garden is **Kanazawa Castle**, easily accessed through the Ishikawa-mon Gate, a designated Important National Cultural Asset. From 1583 to the end of the Edo Period, the castle was the seat of the powerful Maeda Clan, lords of Kaga, a feudal domain ranking second only to the Tokugawa possessions in terms of size and wealth.



Lunch will be in **Omicho Market**, known throughout Japan for its fresh seafood and fine sushi.

In the afternoon, the group will split for separate activities.

Physicians will visit a local acupuncture clinic to learn about this age-old practice.

Acupuncture is the insertion of fine needles into the body at specific points shown as effective in the treatment of specific health problems. These points have been mapped by the Chinese over a period of two thousand years. Recently, electromagnetic research has confirmed their locations.

Modern Western Medicine cannot explain how acupuncture works. Traditional acupuncture is based on ancient Chinese theories of the flow of Qi (Energy) and Xue (Blood) through distinct meridians (pathways) cover the body somewhat like the nerves and blood vessels do. According to ancient theory, acupuncture allows Qi to flow to areas where it is Deficient and away from where it is Excess. In this way, acupuncture regulates and restores the harmonious energetic balance of the body. In Chinese there is a saying, "There is no pain if there is free flow; if there is pain, there is no free flow."

*Although it has been used in Japan since the 6th century, **Japanese acupuncture** today is quite different from Chinese as, generally speaking, it involves thinner needles and a shallower needle insertion (through a guiding tube), making a treatment more relaxing and less uncomfortable. It places a lot of emphasis on the use of palpation (touch) before needle treatment and practitioners rely on abdominal palpation to judge the insertion point of the needle. This practice roots from the many blind acupuncturists of Ancient Japan, and it goes hand in hand with the gentle needling.*

It relies on moxibustion (heat therapy) as much as it does on acupuncture needles in treating people. This combination is very effective at giving the patient a well-rounded gentle, yet, powerful treatment.



The WHO has stated that acupuncture is suitable for treating disorders relating to ear, nose, and throat; respiratory gastrointestinal; eye and nervous system and muscular issues and it is also believed to have benefits for many other problems including knee pain, sprains and most gynecological complaints.

Partners will head across town to the **old Samurai district** of Kanazawa, Nagamachi. The cobblestone streets and tiled earthen walls are characteristic of wealthier samurai districts in Kanazawa during the Edo period (1603–1867). Explore the area's picturesque canals and beautifully restored homes for a sense of what life was like for samurai of that time including a visit to **Nomura House**, a restored samurai residence displaying the lifestyle and artifacts of a high ranked samurai family. Freshly made green tea can be enjoyed on the second floor while viewing the small Japanese garden below.

Samurai were the hereditary military nobility and officer caste of medieval and early modern Japan from the 12th century to their abolition in the 1870s. They were the well-paid retainers of the daimyo (powerful Japanese feudal lords) and had high prestige and special privileges such as wearing two swords. They cultivated the bushido codes of martial virtues, indifference to pain, and unflinching loyalty, engaging in many local battles. During the peaceful Edo era they became the stewards and chamberlains of the daimyo estates, gaining managerial experience and education. In the 1870s samurai families comprised 5% of the population. The Meiji Revolution ended their feudal roles, and they moved into professional and entrepreneurial roles. Their memory and weaponry remain prominent in Japanese popular culture.



Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Kanawaza.

DAY 10 – May 27: Kanawaza - Hiroshima (B, L)



Hiroshima (population 1.2m) is the capital of Hiroshima Prefecture, and the largest city in the Chugoku region of western Honshu.

When the first atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the city became known worldwide for this unenviable distinction. The destructive power of the bomb was tremendous and obliterated nearly everything within a two kilometer radius. After the war, great efforts were taken to rebuild the city. Predictions that the city would be uninhabitable proved false. Destroyed monuments of Hiroshima's historical heritage, like Hiroshima Castle and Shukkeien Garden, were reconstructed and it is now a modern, cosmopolitan city, featuring excellent cuisine and a bustling nightlife.

In the center of the city a large park was built and given a name that would reflect the aspirations of the re-born city: Peace Memorial Park which acts as tribute to the bomb's victims.

Hiroshima is laced with rivers and wide, tree-lined boulevards and features various art galleries, parks, and museums. Hiking, cycling, ocean sports, and skiing are all popular outdoor activities. The city is also famous for savory okonomiyaki pancakes, anago or saltwater eel, and other culinary delights as well as being the original home of the Mazda car production and now hosts a Mazda Museum. It was declared the City of Peace in 1969 by the Japanese parliament and now receives much international attention as a desirable location for holding international conferences on peace as well as social issues.

Hiroshima is also the most popular gateway for trips to nearby Miyajima, a jewel of an island considered to be one of Japan's most scenic spots.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/chugoku/hiroshima/>

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, take the Thunderbird Express directly from Kanazawa Station in front of your hotel and then change train at Kyoto Station to take the Shinkansen. During the train journey, your guide will initiate you to **Origami**.



Origami, from ori meaning "folding", and kami meaning "paper" is the art of paper folding, and, although it actually has its roots in China from as early as 105AD, it is most often associated with Japanese culture and has been practiced in Japan since the Edo period (1603–1867). It has evolved over many hundreds of years from very basic, ritual objects to the myriad of contemporary designs we see today.

The origami bases that are the beginnings of so many models are Japanese in origin. In modern usage, the word "origami" is used as an inclusive term for all folding practices, regardless of their culture of origin. The goal is to transform a flat square sheet of paper into a finished sculpture through folding and sculpting techniques.

Today, many people are attracted to the idea of learning how to fold origami figures because paper is a cheap craft supply. When origami was first practiced, however, it was a craft only for the elite. Japanese monks folded origami figures for religious purposes. Origami was also used in various formal ceremonies, such as the practice of folding paper butterflies to adorn sake bottles at a Japanese couple's wedding reception. Tsutsumi, folded paper gift wrappers, were used in some ceremonies to symbolize sincerity and purity. Tsuki, folded pieces of paper accompanying a valuable gift, are another example of ceremonial paper folding since these models would act as a certificate of authenticity.

<https://thedesigntest.net/history-of-origami-paper-folding/>

Arrival at Hiroshima Station. Lunch will be near the station and you will discover the **Okonomiyaki**, a Hiroshima specialty that looks like a pancake.

Okonomiyaki is a Japanese-style savoury crepe or pancake. Okonomi means "whatever you like" or "whatever you want," while yaki means grilled. As you can easily imagine, the great thing about this tasty dish is that you can complement it with all your favorite ingredients, egg, cabbage, soba noodles, and meat or seafood.

This afternoon, visit the **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park** featuring several memorials, monuments, museums, and lecture halls as testament to the fateful day in August 1945 when Hiroshima was chosen as target for the first ever wartime use of the atomic bomb which killed 220,000 people, either from the initial blast or exposure to radiation. It stands as an advocate for world peace, while remembering this devastating incident in Japanese history. The park is also the site of the annual August 6th Peace Memorial Ceremony, a ceremony held every year on the anniversary of the bomb attack - thousands write messages of peace on paper lanterns that are lit at sunset to float down the river past the iconic remains of the Atomic Bomb Dome.

Visit the **Genbaku (A-Bomb) Dome** - with only the partially-standing structure and skeletal ruins left after the bomb attack, this domed building is now listed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The dome was just metres from where the bomb detonated so it was able to retain its shape and looks almost exactly as it did after the bombing. The **Cenotaph for the A-Bomb Victims** is an arched tomb for those who died and below the arch is a stone chest holding a register of these names, of which there are over 220,000. Inside the Peace Park you will also find a **museum** and **Children Peace statue** where you can bring your Crane Origami in memory of Sadako, a victim of the Atomic bomb.



Evening at leisure.

Overnight at hotel in Hiroshima

DAY 11 – May 28: Hiroshima – Miyajima - Hiroshima (B, D)

Breakfast at the hotel and then a split program in the first part of the morning before the group meets back up again to head for the serene island of Miyajima.

Physicians – visit to Harada Hospital to meet with local doctors and learn about the Japanese healthcare system.

Partners will visit a Gin & Whisky distillery in Hiroshima at **Sakurao Distillery**.

Sakurao is a craft distillery which challenges new possibilities in the production of Western liquors. It is the home of the first and only gin domestically produced using ingredients from Hiroshima and has recently begun production of Hiroshima's first single-malt whisky which, after being fully aged for at least three years, is due to make its world debut in 2021.



From mainland Hiroshima, a short (30kms) ferry ride leads to **Miyajima**, a small sacred island located in the Seto Inland Sea.

While officially named Itsukushima, the island is more commonly referred to as Miyajima, Japanese for "shrine island". This is because the island is so closely related to its key shrine, Itsukushima Shrine, in the public's mind. The Island has a long history as a holy site of Shinto with its highest peak, Mount Misen, being worshiped by local people as early as the 6th century. In 1168, Taira no Kiyomori, the most powerful man in Japan during the end of the Heian Period, selected the island as the site of his clan's family shrine and built Itsukushima Shrine.



Start with a visit to this venerable Shinto shrine of **Itsukushima**. The shrine is designed in a pier-like structure and dates back to the 6th century.

Like the torii gate, the shrine's main buildings are built over water. At high tide, the shrine's huge vermilion *o-torii* gate seems to be floating in the water which is considered to be one of the most beautiful sights in Japan. The shrine complex consists of multiple buildings, including a prayer hall, a main hall and a *noh* theater stage, which are connected by boardwalks and supported by pillars above the sea.

Walk towards the mountain to visit **Daisho-in**, the most visited Buddhist temple on the island and one of the most important temples of Shingon Buddhism. It is located at the base of Mount Misen, on which the sect's founder, Kobo Daishi, first began the practice of Buddhism on the island of Miyajima. An interesting Buddhist ritual can be performed when walking up the temple's steps. Along the stairs is a row of spinning metal wheels that are inscribed with *sutra* (Buddhist scriptures). Turning the inscriptions as one walks up is believed to have the same effect as reading them. So, without any knowledge of Japanese, you can benefit from the blessings that the reading of *sutra* is believed to entail.



As you explore the island, also famous for its wild deer, maybe sample some local delicacies like oysters, saltwater eel, and maple leaf-shaped cakes. The size and physical landscape of Miyajima makes it an ideal place for walking.

Return to Hiroshima where you will have some free time before dinner which will be at a local restaurant in Hiroshima. Overnight at hotel in Hiroshima.

DAY 12 – May 29: Hiroshima - Kyoto (B, L)



Kyoto (population 15m), originally founded as Heian-kyo in 794 (literally, "tranquility and peace capital") was the capital of Japan, and the emperor's residence, for over 1000 years before Tokyo became its capital in 1868. It is Japan's most beautiful city with a rich cultural heritage possessing 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and it retains its status as the reigning cultural capital of Japan. Over the centuries, Kyoto was destroyed by many wars and fires, but due to its exceptional historic value, the city was dropped from the list of target cities for the atomic bomb and escaped destruction during World War II. Countless temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures survive in the city today.

Arriving initially in Kyoto, one's first impression is that of a modern metropolis but, beyond the nondescript high-rises around Kyoto Station hides the Japan of your imagination: a place where you'll see geisha glide past 17th-century teahouses in Gion's narrow alleys; where you can imagine the lives of court nobility at the Imperial Palace; where you can seek contemplation in Ryoanji's Zen rock gardens and under billowing cherry trees on the Philosopher's Path. If Tokyo is the door to Japan's future, Kyoto is a window on its mysterious past.

Kyoto is Japan's craft capital, where skills are still passed down through generations. Tiny specialty shops in Shijo Dori, Kawaramachi Dori and the Kyoto Handicraft Center deal in Yuzen-dyed fabrics to wooden combs, fans and everything you need to host a tea ceremony. Shinmonzen Dori and Furumonzen Dori are peppered with antique shops and galleries selling woodblock prints and the department stores around Shijo-Kawaramachi intersection and Kyoto Station are good bets for lacquerware and kimono.

It is also home to a range of unique dining experiences -- from eating lip-numbing fugu (pufferfish) in traditional restaurants to shojin ryori (vegetarian cooking) in the tranquil gardens of a Buddhist temple. Follow Higashiyama-ku's red lanterns to lively yakitori-ya, specializing in grilled chicken skewers or, for tofu dishes and perfect noodles, head to Kita-ku's bars, some housed in converted sake warehouses. Or indulge yourself in kaiseki ryori, seasonally inspired Japanese cuisine artistically presented in lacquered bowls.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kansai/kyoto/>

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today's destination is **Kyoto**, the cultural capital of Japan and a fitting city to end your tour in, that you will reach by Shinkansen directly from Hiroshima.

Arriving at **Kyoto Station**, you are immediately immersed in the fascinating contrasts of this unique city as the Kyoto Station building (opened in 1997) conveys a futuristic design and atmosphere that was conceived to convey historical Kyoto through a modern design. It is a massive, ultra-modern complex of glass and steel designed by award-winning architect Hiroshi Hara with the exposed steel beamed roof in the station's large main hall meant to reflect the grid like layout of Kyoto's street network.



Your first visit will be to **Fushimi Inari**, one of the most unusual Shinto shrines in Japan. It is famous for its thousands of vermilion Torii gates, which straddle a network of trails behind its main buildings which lead into the wooded forest of the sacred Mount Inari. It is the most important of several thousands of shrines dedicated to Inari, the Shinto god of rice.

The shrine, which featured in "*Memoirs of a Geisha*", is very famous for the impressive contrast and mystical atmosphere created by the colors of the Torii and those of the surrounding nature.

After the visit of Fushimi Inari, you will have **Yakitori lunch** in a traditional Japanese *Kyo-machiya* (Kyoto traditional house) in the middle of Kyoto city.

Yakitori (literally 'grilled bird') is a Japanese type of skewered chicken. Its preparation involves skewering the meat with *kushi*, a type of skewer typically made of steel, bamboo, or similar materials. Afterwards, they are grilled over a charcoal fire. During or after cooking, the meat is typically seasoned with *tare* (teriyaki like) sauce or salt. The term is sometimes used informally for *kushiyaki* (grilled and skewered foods) in general. Yakitori has become popular in certain areas of North America in recent years due to its exposure by food personalities like Anthony Bourdain and David Chang. Both men featured yakitori meals on their television shows "*No Reservations*" and "*Ugly Delicious*" respectively.

After lunch experience a Tea Ceremony with a tea master in a private temple.

The **Japanese tea ceremony** is called *Chanoyu*, *Sado* or simply *Ocha* in Japanese. It is a choreographic ritual of preparing and serving Japanese green tea, called *Matcha*, together with traditional Japanese sweets to balance with the bitter taste of the tea. Preparing tea in this ceremony means pouring all one's attention into the predefined movements. The whole process is not about drinking tea, but is about aesthetics, preparing a bowl of tea from one's heart. The host of the ceremony always considers the guests with every movement and gesture. Even the placement of the tea utensils is considered from the guests view point (angle), especially the main guests called the *Shokyaku*. <http://japanese-tea-ceremony.net/>



In the afternoon, discover the temple **Kiyomizudera**. Literally meaning "Pure Water Temple", it is one of the most celebrated temples in Japan. It was founded in 780 on the site of the Otowa Waterfall in the wooded hills east of Kyoto and is best known for the wooden stage that juts out from its main hall. The stage affords visitors an excellent view of the numerous cherry and maple trees below that erupt in a sea of colour in spring and fall as well as panoramic views of the city. The temple was originally associated with the Hosso sect, one of the oldest schools within Japanese Buddhism, but formed its own Kita Hosso sect in 1965. In 1994, the temple was added to the list of UNESCO world heritage sites.

Around the base of Kiyomizudera is the **Higashiyama area**, one of the city's best preserved historic districts. The narrow lanes, wooden buildings and traditional merchant shops invoke a feeling of the old capital city and the streets are lined by small shops, cafes and restaurants which have been catering to tourists and pilgrims for centuries. These businesses retain their traditional design, although many have been renovated through the years, and they continue to serve customers today, selling local specialties such as Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, sweets, pickles, crafts and other souvenirs.



Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Kyoto.

DAY 13 – May 30: Kyoto (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today, commence your sightseeing of Kyoto with a visit to **Nijo Castle**. The castle was built in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first *shogun* of the Edo Period. The main building was completed in early 1600s and has since then been known for its Momoyama-style architecture, decorated sliding doors, and “squeaky nightingale” floors which alerted residents to unwanted intruders. After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace and its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan's feudal era. The entire castle grounds are surrounded by stone walls and moats and the castle was designated a UNESCO world heritage site in 1994.

This is followed by the stunning **Golden Pavilion** collectively known as **Kinkaku-ji Temple**, an elegant, gilded 14th century Zen temple which is one of Japan's most cherished sites. Formally known as Rokuonji, the temple was the retirement villa of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and, according to his will, it became a Zen temple of the Rinzaï sect after his death in 1408. Kinkaku-ji was built to echo the extravagant Kitayama culture that developed in the wealthy aristocratic circles of Kyoto during Yoshimitsu's times and each floor represents a different style of architecture. The temple grounds hold exquisite Japanese gardens and koi ponds and what is undoubtedly impressive is the top two floors of the pavilion that are completely covered in handmade gold-leaf.



Then, proceed to the **Arashiyama** area and marvel at the towering stalks of bamboo as you walk up to the **Tenryu-ji Temple**, which is ranked first amongst the Zen temples in Kyoto, also being recognized as World Heritage Site. The traditional Japanese landscape gardens survived for centuries without much change and are a popular attraction on their own. Next to the temple, you will see the area's most famous spot, the bamboo grove.

At Tenryu-ji Temple, you will have a **traditional Buddhist lunch - shojin ryori** (Zen vegetarian cuisine).

As natural parts of everyday life, cooking and eating have always been regarded in Zen as forms of spiritual practice. Shojin ryori manifests this outlook in a cuisine that harmonizes with Buddhist ideals, creating satisfying, nourishing meals from fresh seasonal vegetables, herbs, and wild plants while depriving no animals of life. Enjoy cuisine at Shigetsu that both sustains the body and provides a true taste of Zen.



After lunch you will have a chance to try **Zazen meditation**, with the session being led by a Buddhist monk who will explain how to sit, breath and focus before initiating a zazen (seated) meditation.

Zazen literally means seated meditation, and this meditation practice originated from China and then spread over Japan, Korea, and the Asian countries. The Japanese word "Zen" is derived from the Chinese word "Chan" which is again taken from the Indian term "Dhyana". Of the many schools of Buddhism that took root in Japan, Zen is the most well-known overseas and perhaps the most synonymous with Japanese culture. Tea ceremony, ikebana flower arranging, garden design and marital arts are all seen as direct expressions of Zen spirit. Bushido, the strict samurai code, was also heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism.



One of the most important teachings of Zen Buddhism is that one can achieve self-enlightenment through meditation and the main purpose of the Zazen technique is spiritual.

It provides deep insight into the way mind functions and helps heal people suffering from depression, anxiety, stressfulness, and similar kind of emotional turbulence. It discloses the innate strength and clarity of mind and is useful for both the beginners and the experts.

The practice requires the participants to sit in perfect posture, helping clear then mind as the aim is to get rid of all views and feelings. Thus, one can build up an insight into the mind and body. Apart from relieving stress or tension, it goes much deeper. It handles some general life questions that the participant may not be able to answer and primarily depends on intuition and practice rather than logic.

The great Buddhist master Bodhidharma described it as "A unique communication outside the teachings; not established upon words as well as letters; pointing simply to the human mind; observing nature and becoming a Buddha."

Instead of resolving life problems temporarily, it focuses on the root cause. It teaches us that true happiness does not depend on wealth, fame, success, or any other materialistic parameters, it lies within us. That the more you will give, the more you will be richer. It encourages us to find happiness in the tiny things that life has gifted us. Our joyfulness increases with the expansion of compassion for others.

According to the Zen masters, if you are looking out for inner peace, 'don't think much about it. Instead, concentrate on 'others' happiness. It will give you unlimited peace and joy.



Then, take a stroll through **Nishiki Market**, a narrow, five block long shopping street lined by more than one hundred shops and restaurants. The market started as a fish wholesale district, with the first shop opening around 1310 and many stores have been operated by the same families for generations.

Also known as "Kyoto's Kitchen", this lively retail market specializes in all things food related, like fresh seafood, produce, knives and cookware, and is a great place to find seasonal foods and Kyoto specialties, such as Japanese sweets, pickles, dried seafood and sushi, and souvenirs in general.

Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel in Kyoto.

DAY 14 – May 31: Kyoto (B, D)

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning you will have a last experience before flying back home which is a **Shiatsu initiation** with a Shiatsu Master. During this class, you will discover how, by acupressure, Shiatsu is used to heal a variety of ailments (see below).

Shiatsu, or Acupressure, is an alternative-medicine manual therapy in which pressure is applied to points on the body aligned along 12 main meridians (pathways), usually for a short time, to improve the flow of qi (life force). Based on concepts in traditional Chinese medicine such as the use of chi meridians from thousands of years ago, it has been further developed in Japan through a synthesis of Eastern and Western medical concepts, using mankind's most ancient medical tools – the human hand and the human heart - to treat the patient using a holistic approach that stimulates the body's own natural self-healing powers to correct imbalances and effect a cure from within.



Shiatsu literally means "finger pressure" and shiatsu techniques include massages with fingers, thumbs, feet and palms; acupressure, assisted stretching; and joint manipulation and mobilization. To examine a patient, a shiatsu practitioner uses palpation and, sometimes, pulse diagnosis. The practitioner can detect variations subtle responses in the person's condition and then apply pressure on the Shiatsu points. A single point may be pressed to relieve a specific symptom or condition, or a series of points can be worked on to promote overall well-being. Those pressures have a deep effect on the inner body so it can improve physical and mental well-being. Studies suggest that shiatsu can be effective for certain health problems, including headaches, pain, stroke-related weakness, eyestrain, sleeplessness, appetite control for diet and body metabolism.

Learn more about Shiatsu at <https://www.shiatsupractor.com/about-shiatsu/>

Free time this afternoon to continue to explore this fascinating old Imperial capital independently.

This evening a Kimono master will come to the hotel for your **Kimono wearing experience** as tonight is your special **kaiseki farewell dinner** in a private Fortune Garden **with Geisha & Maiko** (apprentice Geisha) - an excellent opportunity to learn about what is involved in becoming a Geisha and the art of Japanese hospitality.



Kaiseki ryori has its origin in the traditional tea ceremony, but later evolved into an elaborate dining style popular among aristocratic circles. Kyoto style kaiseki ryori (kyo kaiseki) is particularly refined, placing an emphasis on subtle flavors and local and seasonal ingredients. A kaiseki meal has a prescribed order to their dishes, most of which are prepared by using one of the common techniques of Japanese cooking. However, kaiseki chefs have considerable freedom to add, omit or substitute courses in order to highlight regional and seasonal delicacies and personal style.

Geisha is a member of a professional class of women in Japan whose traditional occupation is to entertain men, in modern times, particularly at businessmen's parties in restaurants or teahouses. The Japanese word geisha literally means "art person," and singing, dancing, and playing the samisen (a flutelike instrument) are indispensable talents for a geisha, along with the ability to make conversation. Many geisha are also adept at flower arranging, performing the tea ceremony, or calligraphy. The main function of the geisha is to provide an atmosphere of chic and gaiety for her wealthy clientele. Geisha are usually exquisitely dressed in traditional kimonos and delicately mannered and have a knowledge not only of the past but also of contemporary gossip.



The geisha system is thought to have emerged in the 17th century to provide a class of entertainers set apart from courtesans ("oiran") and prostitutes, who plied their trades respectively among the nobility and samurai. The geisha system was traditionally a form of indentured labour, although some girls, attracted by the glamour of the life, volunteered. Usually, a girl at an early age was given by her parents for a sum of money to a geisha house ("okiya"), which taught, trained, fed, and clothed her for a period of years. Then she emerged into the society known as karyūkai" (the "flower and willow world") and began earning money to repay her parents' debt and her past keep. The most sought-after geisha could command large sums from their customers.

In the 1920s there were as many as 80,000 geisha in Japan, but by the late 20th century their number had dwindled to only a few thousand. They can still be found in the cities of Tokyo and Kanazawa but Kyoto remains the best and most prestigious place to experience geisha, who are known there as geiko, and there are four separate geiko districts in the Gion district in central Kyoto. The typical location for a geiko dinner are "ochaya" (tea houses), another important element of geiko districts. The ochaya provides just the tatami room where the dinner takes place, while the food and the geiko themselves are ordered from the outside. Ochaya are highly exclusive places due to their traditional way of doing business and will grant entry to trusted customers only.

Learn more about Geishas at <https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2102.html>

Overnight at hotel in Kyoto.

DAY 15 – Jun 1 : Kyoto – Osaka - Onward return flight to Toronto (B)

Breakfast at hotel.

Free time in the morning before an early afternoon transfer to Osaka airport for your return flight to Canada.

Specific flight times / routing will be forwarded upon registration.

Arrival back in Toronto on the evening of June 1, 2024.

The hotel bases...

LOCATION	ACCOMMODATION
Tokyo (3 nights)	The Pullman Tamachi (5*) https://all.accor.com/hotel/B137/index.en.shtml
Hakone (1 night)	Hotel Indigo Hakone Gora (4*) https://www.ihg.com/hotelindigo/hotels/us/en/hakone/hkhhg/hoteldetail
Takayama (2 nights)	Hotel Tokyu Stay Takayama (3*) https://www.tokyustay.co.jp/e/hotel/HTM/
Kanazawa (2 nights)	Hyatt Centric Kanazawa (4*) https://www.hyatt.com/hyatt-centric/kmqct-hyatt-centric-kanazawa
Hiroshima (2 nights)	Hotel Hilton Hiroshima (4*) https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/hijshhi-hilton-hiroshima/
Kyoto (3 nights)	The Thousand Kyoto (4*) https://www.keihanhotels-resorts.co.jp/the-thousand-kyoto/en/

As denoted above, the majority of the accommodation is in 4* properties.

In the unlikely event that a property needs to be substituted it will be of a similar standard.

The price... Cdn \$12,995 / person

Pricing (exc. Insurance) / per person - Cdn\$	Including Air (from Toronto)
Per person (double occupancy)	\$12,995
Single supplement	\$ 2,940
Single share matching fee (A)	\$ 300 **
Transportation / hotel taxes and fees	\$ 735
Academic program registration fee (per MD registrant)	\$ 900

(A) Single share matching fee – can't find a traveling partner but don't want to pay the single supplement? We'll keep our eyes open for similar clients and try and find you a compatible person to share a room with. However, if we are unable to find you a suitable companion the single supplement will be payable.

Connecting flights from other Canadian cities available upon request (supplement applies).

REPEAT CUSTOMER DISCOUNT

If you have travelled with Doctors-on-Tour before, you are eligible for our Repeat Customer Discount. Simply deduct \$100 /person for each separate tour that you have travelled with the company on up to a maximum of \$300 /person (ie travelled on one previous tour, deduct \$100; two tours, \$200; three or more tours, \$300). **Please note, this discount is subject to the payment (s) for the tour being made by cheque or e-transfer.** The discount is to be made from the final balance payment with the deposit amount being paid in full.

COST EFFICIENT INVOICING !

For **invoicing** purposes re Academic Program registrants and their companions, we can also provide a separate invoice with the registrant's air cost plus 100% of the accommodation costs included in the registrant's invoice.

CANADIAN \$ PRICING !

Please note, unlike many programs offered by other companies which are quoted in US\$ (and are also usually land only prices excluding air fare), **our prices remain in Canadian\$** - and, with a premium now of almost 40% (at September 2023) when paying in US\$, this makes a significant difference.

ONLINE REGISTRATION FORM

Our **online registration form** may be accessed via the direct link below –

<https://fs22.formsite.com/Doctorsontour/JAP2405FullRegForm/index>

Full program information may also be found at –

<https://www.doctorsontour.ca/cme-programs-japan-upcoming-2405.php>

Inclusions and Exclusions...

Included in the price :

- Round trip International flights from Toronto to Tokyo and Osaka to Toronto
- Modern, air conditioned coach transportation (including bottled water), local trains and bullet trains (*Shinkansen*)
- All meet and greet services and arrival and departure transfers**
- 4 star hotel accommodation at the majority of properties
- 13 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 4 dinners
- Comprehensive daily itineraries including privately escorted tours of local cultural sites, museums, attractions and shows.
- *Bonzai* workshop
- *Origami* session and personal *origami* crane offering in Hiroshima Peace Park
- Japanese tea ceremony
- Introduction to *Zazen* meditation led by a Buddhist monk
- *Shiatsu* initiation with a *Shiatsu* Master
- Private group dinner hosted by a *Geisha/Maiko*
- All admission fees (except those specifically noted above)
- Fully escorted program including services of local English speaking cultural experts
- Guiding earphone for the duration of the tour
- Porterage
- CME program including tours of various local medical facilities spouses (Academic Program Certificate provided) with separate programs for spouses
- Hosting by our Group Leader and Medical Director, Dr. Steve Szarka and his wife, Marg

** meet and greet services and airport arrival and departure transfers are included if you are travelling on our group arranged flights – if you choose to arrange your own international flights (and they arrive / depart at different times to the group flights) additional private transfer costs will apply

Exclusions

- Any meals or activities not mentioned above
- Camera / video entrance fees (where applicable)
- Personal expenses (laundry, telephone / internet usage, drinks)
- Gratuities for local tour escort / guides and drivers
- International airport departure tax
- Travel insurance – please note, **travel insurance (including medical and trip interruption coverage) is highly recommended** for this tour. Coverage is available through Doctors-on-Tour with Manulife Insurance – please check for further details in our brochure (page 32)

Online registration is available at <https://fs22.formsite.com/Doctorsontour/JAP2405FullRegForm/index>

For **invoicing** purposes re doctors and their spouse, we can also provide a separate invoice with the doctor's air cost plus 100% of the accommodation costs included in the doctor's invoice.

Misc information you need to know...

Travel documentation and visas

An entry visa is not required for Canadian, US or UK citizens but your passport must be valid until at least the planned date of your departure from Japan. Your passport must have at least one empty page for an entry stamp.

A full list of visa exemptions for other countries may be found at https://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/short/novisa.html

The only current (at September 2023) entry requirement for passengers travelling to Japan is as follows –

- Prior to your departure, register via email on the **Visit Japan Web** (a web service that people entering to Japan must use for Immigration and Customs procedures in order to enter Japan) to obtain QR codes and present each QR code at immigration and customs on arrival. Details regarding registration are on Visit Japan Web at <https://vjw-lp.digital.go.jp/en/>

Mandatory vaccinations – NONE

There are no mandatory vaccinations required at the present time (September 2023) for entry into Japan.

Recommended medical precautions

Travellers should always ensure that they are up to date on **routine vaccines** such as measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, varicella (chickenpox) and influenza and COVID-19.

Hepatitis A/B vaccinations are also recommended for travel to Japan.

Travel insurance information... Coverage available through Manulife Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out travel insurance to protect you against the unexpected due to, in particular, limited provincial health care coverage afforded to Canadians while traveling overseas and the cancellation provisions inherent in your booking. We offer the following insurance coverage options through Manulife Insurance, one of Canada's leading insurance providers –

NON-MEDICAL INCLUSIVE PLAN

There are **significant inherent cancellation penalties** associated with your booking as detailed in our booking terms and conditions and this insurance package provides coverage for cancellation penalties if you should have to cancel due to medical, or other listed, reasons either relating to yourself or a member of your immediate family. It also covers you for trip interruption costs short notice return flight home etc) for medical reasons again, either relating to yourself or an immediate family member as well as flight and travel accident and baggage insurance.

ALL INCLUSIVE PLAN

This plan provides coverage for all the components in the Non-medical Inclusive plan, plus health coverage while in the destination

"Cancel for any reason (CFAR)" coverage - NEW and at no additional cost !!

So long as you **purchase either of the two insurance policies above at the same time as your tour booking**, you are automatically entitled to this added benefit of CFAR coverage whereby, if you need to cancel your tour booking up to 14 days or more before departure **for any reason**, your policy will refund you up to a maximum of 50% of the cancellation penalties incurred. This is excellent peace of mind coverage to protect you against (50% of the) cancellation penalties incurred in a situation where the reason for cancellation is not one of the regular covered risks in your policy (ie it is essentially "change of mind" insurance).

PREMIUM PROTECTION PLAN ("PPP")

As a third option, Manulife is now also offering a new enhanced travel insurance policy, their **Premium Protection Plan ("PPP")**. This is Manulife's most comprehensive coverage, providing all the same types of coverage as the All-Inclusive plan (above) but with higher covered amounts in most areas. It is also a simplified policy in so much that, whereas the All-Inclusive plan and Non-medical Inclusive plan (above, and as is the case with most insurance company travel policies) have a list of specific covered events, the **PPP offers cancellation coverage for any unexpected and unforeseen event** (ie., any event, situation or circumstance that is beyond your control that prevents you from travelling) with only a few exclusions that apply.

An overview of the PPP may be found by clicking [here](#)

A comparison of the enhanced benefits provided by the PPP compared to Manulife's regular All Inclusive plan may be found by clicking [here](#)

A major benefit of the PPP is that coverage for reimbursement of inherent cancellation penalties under the **Cancel For Any Reason (CFAR)" coverage is increased to 80%** of the cancellation penalties incurred for all cancellation **up to 7 days or more before departure**.

Please note, the PPP is only available to clients under the age of 75 (at the date of purchase of the insurance coverage) and **must be purchased at the same time as the travel tour booking is made** (72 hour grace period).

A detailed overview of coverage benefits and limitations of each insurance policy that we offer through Manulife may be found at -

<https://www.igoinured.com/Direct/ManulifeGlobal.aspx?ag=ONTOTPR&lang=E>

Manulife's insurance premiums (dependent upon your age at the time of purchasing insurance and your total tour costs) are below -

Total insurable costs (\$/person)	NON-MEDICAL INCLUSIVE								ALL-INCLUSIVE							
	Age>	0-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	0-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84
4000 - 4500	421	421	460	502	546	760	1,096	1,096	516	516	625	744	1,126	1,256	1,782	1,782
4500 - 5000	455	455	501	549	600	835	1,191	1,191	550	550	666	791	1,180	1,317	1,877	1,877
5000 - 5500	489	489	541	597	654	909	1,285	1,285	584	584	706	839	1,234	1,378	1,971	1,971
5500 - 6000	522	522	582	644	708	983	1,380	1,380	617	617	747	886	1,288	1,438	2,066	2,066
6000 - 6500	556	556	622	691	762	1,057	1,474	1,474	651	651	787	933	1,342	1,499	2,160	2,160
6500 - 7000	590	590	663	738	816	1,132	1,569	1,569	685	685	828	980	1,396	1,560	2,255	2,255
7000 - 7500	624	624	703	786	870	1,206	1,663	1,663	719	719	868	1,028	1,450	1,621	2,349	2,349
7500 - 8000	657	657	744	833	924	1,280	1,758	1,758	752	752	909	1,075	1,504	1,681	2,444	2,444
8000 - 8500	691	691	784	880	978	1,354	1,852	1,852	786	786	949	1,122	1,558	1,742	2,538	2,538
8500 - 9000	725	725	825	927	1,032	1,429	1,947	1,947	820	820	990	1,169	1,612	1,803	2,633	2,633
9000 - 9500	759	759	865	975	1,086	1,503	2,041	2,041	854	854	1,030	1,217	1,666	1,864	2,727	2,727
9500 - 10000	792	792	906	1,022	1,140	1,577	2,136	2,136	887	887	1,071	1,264	1,720	1,924	2,822	2,822
10000 - 10500	826	826	946	1,069	1,194	1,651	2,230	2,230	921	921	1,111	1,311	1,774	1,985	2,916	2,916
10500 - 11000	860	860	987	1,116	1,248	1,726	2,325	2,325	955	955	1,152	1,358	1,828	2,046	3,011	3,011
11000 - 11500	894	894	1,027	1,164	1,302	1,800	2,419	2,419	989	989	1,192	1,406	1,882	2,107	3,105	3,105
11500 - 12000	927	927	1,068	1,211	1,356	1,874	2,514	2,514	1,022	1,022	1,233	1,453	1,936	2,167	3,200	3,200
12000 - 12500	961	961	1,108	1,258	1,410	1,948	2,608	2,608	1,056	1,056	1,273	1,500	1,990	2,228	3,294	3,294
12500 - 13000	995	995	1,149	1,305	1,464	2,023	2,703	2,703	1,090	1,090	1,314	1,547	2,044	2,289	3,389	3,389
13000 - 13500	1,029	1,029	1,189	1,353	1,518	2,097	2,797	2,797	1,124	1,124	1,354	1,595	2,098	2,350	3,483	3,483
13500 - 14000	1,062	1,062	1,230	1,400	1,572	2,171	2,892	2,892	1,157	1,157	1,395	1,642	2,152	2,410	3,578	3,578
14000 - 14500	1,096	1,096	1,270	1,447	1,626	2,245	2,986	2,986	1,191	1,191	1,435	1,689	2,206	2,471	3,672	3,672
14500 - 15000	1,130	1,130	1,311	1,494	1,680	2,320	3,081	3,081	1,225	1,225	1,476	1,736	2,260	2,532	3,767	3,767

Total insurable costs (\$/person)	PREMIUM PROTECTION PLAN (PPP)			
	Age>	0-69	70-74	75+
4000 - 4500	675	1,296		Coverage not available if age 75 or over at the date of purchasing insurance
4500 - 5000	750	1,440		
5000 - 5500	825	1,584		
5500 - 6000	900	1,728		
6000 - 6500	975	1,872		
6500 - 7000	1,050	2,016		
7000 - 7500	1,125	2,160		
7500 - 8000	1,200	2,304		
8000 - 8500	1,275	2,448		
8500 - 9000	1,350	2,592		
9000 - 9500	1,425	2,736		
9500 - 10000	1,500	2,880		
10000 - 10500	1,575	3,024		
10500 - 11000	1,650	3,168		
11000 - 11500	1,725	3,312		
11500 - 12000	1,800	3,456		
12000 - 12500	1,875	3,600		
12500 - 13000	1,950	3,744		
13000 - 13500	2,025	3,888		
13500 - 14000	2,100	4,032		
14000 - 14500	2,175	4,176		
14500 - 15000	2,250	4,320		

For residents of Ontario, simply accept your choice of insurance (Non-medical Inclusive, All-Inclusive or Premium Protection coverage) on our *online* registration form and we will apply the premium above on your invoice confirmation (if using our *pdf* registration form, enter the applicable premium from the above table when completing the registration form)

For residents of Canadian provinces other than Ontario, insurance regulations state that travel insurance should be taken out directly with Manulife Insurance, albeit through a direct web link hosted on our web site, ie you should purchase your travel insurance policy by simply following the link below to take advantage of our preferred rates with Manulife) via our company's exclusive Manulife link:

<https://www.igoinjured.com/Direct/ManulifeGlobal.aspx?ag=ONTOTPR&lang=E>

Non-Canadian residents

For residents of countries outside of Canada (including the USA), insurance regulations allow us to sell "**Trip Cancellation**" insurance (this policy includes both trip cancellation and trip interruption coverage but not medical coverage). Hence it is not possible for non-Canadian residents to purchase either the All Inclusive or Premium Protection plans from Manulife. We do find that many of our overseas clients already have medical insurance through other channels and therefore, if this is the case, you may purchase "Trip Cancellation" coverage by following the link below to purchase the "Trip Cancellation" insurance policy (taking advantage of our preferred rates with Manulife) via our company's exclusive Manulife link:

<https://www.igoinjured.com/Direct/ManulifeGlobal.aspx?ag=ONTOTPR&lang=E>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Travel insurance that may be available through your credit card

When considering any of the travel insurance policies above, if you believe you may have coverage through your **credit card** we would strongly advise checking with the credit card company the actual coverage afforded to ensure it covers medical, trip cancellation and trip interruption as not all of these items are covered (or may only offer limited coverage as to trip duration or insured \$amount in the event of a claim - sometimes as low as only \$1,000 per person) by all kinds of cards. Also, most coverage through credit card benefits does not include Cancel For Any Reason (CFAR) coverage.

Testimonials

“Great hotel facilities, excellent service – an extremely enjoyable, and educational, week
Dr. Doug Wooster, Toronto – Chile, 2005

“Great company, well organized and interesting tours, educational lectures and great food (and wine....!) – Fantastic trip!”
Dr. Ray Martin, Toronto – Argentina, 2006

“Thanks for planning such an amazing trip. Our congenial group enjoyed so many rich experiences together and collected memories to last a lifetime. Each day was an adventure!
Andrea Maurice – Vietnam / Cambodia, 2007

“I want to express our appreciation for a wonderful trip. The tour operator and the guides were excellent and everything went very smoothly.... this was a tremendous trip which we will need to review again over the coming days to catalogue and appreciate all the places we visited and the marvelous things we saw.. Thanks again for all the hard work in putting the trip together with the memorable result that was achieved...
Dr. Rudy Hyles, Mississauga – Ecuador & The Galapagos, 2008

“Wonderful people! Wonderful places!”
Dr. Phil McGuire, Ottawa – Peru, 2009

“The organization and accommodation were both excellent. We were always looked after with consideration and provided with a wide variety of interesting activities and experiences. The guides were most helpful and informative. A wonderful tour!”
Dr. Michael Dales, Toronto - Ecuador & The Galapagos, 2009

“I do not have words to express my appreciation and admiration for the your hospitality and service provided by your company and your partners on the ground in India”
Dr. Sudhir Pandya – Northern India, 2009

“A wonderful trip. It was amazing to see so many different animals co-existing on the beautiful African plains. The Kenyan and Tanzanian people we met were gracious and welcoming.
Our host/trip manager was excellent - very bright, knowledgeable, good problem solver, great people skills - a delightful man who really made our trip memorable. Our guide/driver was also excellent - very knowledgeable, an excellent driver and keen to make our safari experience a good one. We had lots of fun and learned a lot from him.
I loved the parks and reserves - the Serengeti and Ngorongoro are absolutely amazing”.
Andrea Maurice, Toronto – Kenya & Tanzania – March, 2010

“The guides throughout the trip were superb, well informed with excellent local knowledge and willing to discuss any topic!
The visits to the local hospitals were excellent. A fantastic tour!”
Dr. Linda Stirk, Toronto - Ecuador & The Galapagos (and Peru), 2010

“We had a great visit to the Falls. Stefani was a very helpful guide. The hotel and facilities were fabulous. The tour overall was an exciting experience. Thanks to you both and Ian for the hard work and planning.
Drs. Hirsch and Indra Rastogi, Ancaster – Brazil, 2011

“In addition to exploring the fantastic sights of Northern India, our group visited local hospitals and clinics to learn more about how medicine is practiced in India as well as in the SOS Children’s village in Jaipur and the Mother Teresa charity Mission in Agra” - Dr. Serge Puksa, Northern India, 2011

“We found this tour to be a wonderful adventure... even more than we had anticipated. The planning and attention to detail on the ground ensured we had a comprehensive introduction to the many wonders of Ecuador. I will definitely consider participating in another program and will be certain to share details with my colleagues”
Dr. Alison Kelford, Oakville - Ecuador & the Galapagos, 2011

"Spain greatly surpassed my expectations, offering wonderful gastronomic experiences, lavished with outstanding wines and extremely hospitable people with a culture and history that is as rich as deep. Fernando Garcia, through his many connections, was able to allow us access to exclusive vineyards , where we were submerged in to the local cuisine and regaled with their finest wines".

Dr. Peter Bloch, Oakville – Spain Gourmet tour, 2011

"Our guide was excellent, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Cooking classes were good and the hotels were excellent"

Dr. Barbara Flanagan, Charlottetown – Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia, 2012

"Excellent! Loved the trip and well worth it. Life changing experience, excellent speakers and very well organized. Met some great people and will keep in touch for future trips. Will definitely book another doctors-on-tour trip in the future"

Dr. Janel Gracey, London – Bali, 2012

"A quick personal note to tell you how much we enjoyed our trip to Spain & Portugal. The whole agenda was well planned and well carried out. The winery visits and dinners were amazing, we learned so much about the history and making of Port."

Dr. Blair Fraser, Guelph – Spain & Portugal, 2012

"We had a magical time in Machu Picchu - such a spiritual time at day break - our guide was great! Many thanks for the fabulous trip - memorable and well organized. Your company does such a great job and such an opportunity for us, and what a great group of people to share such an amazing trip with".

Dr. Paul Bates, London – Ecuador & the Galapagos, Peru 2012

"What an amazing trip this was ! Your company did such a fantastic job – well organized with wonderful support staff – everything left on time, great food, weather & traveling companions – and (our guide) Gonzalo was the best ! Thank you very much for such an unforgettable adventure".

Jack & Lore Brown, London - Ecuador & the Galapagos, 2012

"I have been fortunate to enjoy four trips with doctors-on-tour since 2009 - to Ecuador, Vietnam/Cambodia/Laos, India and Bali. All these tours were wonderful. Well-organized, excellent accommodations, top notch guides, remarkable CME experiences that broaden one's outlook on medicine and really great leaders of the tours. You should seriously consider taking one of these exotic trips. Beats lying on a beach!"

Dr. Linda Rapson, Toronto – 2013

"We enjoyed our extension to the UAE and saw an amazing amount in a short time. Our guide was very helpful, informative and pleasant and we appreciated how he was able to inform us about the country, it's people and customs. Excellent !"

Drs Christopher & Margaret Ibey, Parry Sound, On. – United Arab Emirates, 2013

"The whole trip was wonderful and very well organized. We appreciated the advance preparation information packages. The hotel accommodation was excellent and the guides provided a lot of background information in Indian culture and society which made the trip even more valuable as a learning experience. We enjoyed all of it – including meeting Dr. Peter, & Mary, Bloch (Group Medical Director) and the great people in the group!"

Dr. Ron Eliosoff, Ottawa - South India, 2013

"Excellent trip – hotels, guides, food and company and we saw such wonderful sites.

Dr. Martin and Eileen McIntyre, Brantford - Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos, 2013

"We had a wonderful trip. It was such an interesting mix of people that we laughed all the way through - an amazing experience and a fabulous time. The Pantanal was awesome and we also totally loved the old colonial town of Paraty. We enjoyed ourselves so much we are thinking of signing up for another one soon. Thanks again - you did a wonderful job - it was a dream".

Dyana Driscoll, Toronto – Brazil, 2013

"I was extremely pleased with my second trip through Doctors-on-Tour to Kenya & Tanzania - the tour was one of the most amazing things I have experienced!"

Dr. Kerri McGuire, Ottawa - Kenya & Tanzania, 2013

"Fantastic experience! Every detail to perfection."
Dr. Les Marien, Orangeville, On. - Spain Gourmet, 2013

"Had a great time! Very well organized"
Dr. Yusuf Januwala, Ipswich, Queensland, Australia - Ecuador (Galapagos) & Peru, 2013

"Our guide was amazing - so professional and knowledgeable. Great itinerary - Well done !"
Dr. Susan Smith, Frederickton, N.B - South Africa, 2014

"We had a wonderful trip. Places we stayed during the tour were all very nice and every one had a good time. Your local tour manager was wonderful, extremely helpful and very well organized. Thanks again for all your help"
Dr. Kumar Banerjee, Vancouver, B.C. - South India, 2014

"We felt the tour is one of the best (CME tours) we have been on. We keep missing the great Chilean wines and Argentinian beef. Right sized group and great company. CME tours were interesting and informative. Our guides were good and I enjoyed learning about the country from their comments".
Dr. Eduardo Aenlle, Fallbrook, California - Chile, Argentina and Patagonia Cruise, 2014

"It was an amazing trip thru Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos. It exceeded all our expectations. Our group leaders were gracious hosts. Their thirst for adventure and generosity of spirit added so much to our trip. The group we traveled with were a great bunch and we hope to cross paths in the future. The CMEs were informative and I enjoyed seeing the varied medical sites in each country"
Dr. Tom Stark, Timaru, New Zealand - Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos, 2014

"Macchu Picchu and Galapagos were the highlights. Wonderful guides, very well organized and enjoyable. Tour leader did a great job !"
Dr. Michael Garner, Montreal, QC - Ecuador (Galapagos) & Peru, 2014

"Our guide was absolutely fabulous - she took superb care of us and added so much to the trip through her knowledge of New Zealand history, flora and fauna. Peter and Mary (Bloch) were wonderful medical leaders - calm, helpful, interesting and vivacious - kudos to them."
Drs. Peter & Louise Bobechko, Toronto, On. - New Zealand, 2015

"I really enjoyed this tour - Rajasthan and Agra are beautiful. Our tour escort, Kumar, has great people skills, and has been very attentive to everyone's needs - Himanshu has been an excellent guide and is very knowledgeable. We would love to return to India on your South India program"
Dr. Rajalaxmi Wong, North Bay, On. - North India, 2015

"The trip to South Africa was awesome - I would rank it up there with my favorite so far with Doctors on Tour. The people in our group were wonderful - it was a total joy and I can see now why South Africa is one of your favorite destinations"
Dyana Driscoll, Toronto, On.- South Africa, 2015

"Bob and I enjoyed the time shared with each of you in Bali,
My expectations for the tour were met and exceeded .It really was a small window into the Balinese culture.
To (our group leaders) Bonnie and Mel, Thanks! Hope this isn't our last tour.
You all were interesting and gracious, Terima Kasih. Selamat Jalan"
Dr. Bob & Evelyn Lawler, Gibsonia, PA - Bali 2015

"I found the trip to Spain to be a great combination of site-seeing, CME and amazing gourmet meals and wines selected by an internationally famous chef. We visited several famous vineyards and were able to sample their wines. The visit to an ophthalmological institute was especially memorable, we watched lens surgery in close up. The visit was very well organized with time to explore cities on our own, as well as tours of architectural wonders. I strongly recommend this tour as a great experience"
Dr. John Cocker, Stouffville, On - Spain Gourmet, 2015

"Thank you for your excellent guidance during our trip to Ecuador. the trip was very good, and the logistics and handling of the group were excellent"

Dr. David Spence, London, On - Ecuador (including the Galapagos and Amazon), 2015

"The trip was exceptional in every way. Our guide was more than just a tour guide - the knowledge she shared was detailed and interesting - what an ambassador for her country! The high level of care that she offered was above and beyond anything that we have ever experienced. We thoroughly enjoyed every minute of this trip! Thank you!"

Dr. Les Marien, Orangeville, On - New Zealand, 2016

"The tour guides in each country were excellent. Fabulous trip!

Dr. Gail Neild, Woodbridge, On. – Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos, 2016

"An enjoyable and enlightening tour"

Dr. Brian Davies, Sarnia, On. - China, 2016

"A great exposure to Balinese culture and the spiritual aspects behind their healing philosophy"

Dr. Karyn Klapecki, Toronto, On. - Bali, 2016

"I am in withdrawal, eating salad. Good for the body, not as good for the soul as the food last week! What an awesome group of people to get to know! We felt truly blessed to enjoy Spain with all of you.

Dr. Wendy Reimer, Breslau, ON – Spain Gourmet, 2016

"An extremely interesting, informative and invigorating tour. The medical CME components were excellent and I'm glad that we were able to see and experience so much".

Dr. Paula Chalmers, Vancouver, B.C. - South Africa, 2017

"Myanmar was very well organized and our guide was excellent - the best I have ever had! The sites and activities in Bhutan were very enjoyable and the local medical facilities and clinics that we visited as part of the CME were good"

Dr. Brenda Cholin, North Battleford, SK - Myanmar & Bhutan, 2017

"It was an incredible tour - we saw so much !"

Dr. Mo Meghji, Kitchener, On. - Argentina & Chile, including Patagonia cruise, 2017

"This was a very good tour. The progress that the country has made over the years has been very significant. However, China still has multiple levels of Red Tape, both public and private that will not change ever, so it must be accepted. Overall a 9.5 out of 10 !"

Dr. Ted Erb, Waterloo, On. - China, 2017

"Everything was excellent! We had a wonderful time. Hotels were superb. Thank you again for the well organized, all details worked out, great trip!"

Dr. Andrea Cordas, Burlington, On. – South India, 2017

"It was our first trip with your company. John and I loved it. The itinerary was perfect. Busy days followed by quieter ones. Lorna and Ashley were lovely and so capable! The coordination was superb. Thank you. We had the trip of a lifetime!"

Dr. John Gapski, Mississauga, On. – Ecuador & Galapagos, 2017

"We really enjoyed traveling with an interesting group of professionals which gave us the opportunity to visit places where the public normally does not have easy entry. Excellent pre-departure information and the tour was well-balanced with a mixture of historic and social highlights, while travelling through very different landscapes and areas of the country. The public/private health care system was well described on the Groote Schuur Hospital tour and the children's' song and dance performance at SOS children's village in Cape Town was touching. Our local tour guide was outstanding [5+++] and provided excellent context for the political, economic and social aspects of SA. He was calm, professional, responded quickly to everyone's needs and was very proud of his country".

Helle & Tony Tosine, Toronto, On. – South Africa, 2017

"We really enjoyed New Zealand and the services provided by your company. The Academic Conference presentations were top caliber and contained information useful to both the specialist and generalist. I enjoyed getting to know and learning from the other group participants. We would recommend this trip and plan to travel with Doctors on Tour again".
Dr. John Britt, Winston-Salem, NC - New Zealand, 2018

We enjoyed our trip very much. The hotels we stayed in were superb, the itinerary was great and the guides, both in Bhutan and in Myanmar, were fabulous. Overall it was a wonderful, memorable trip. Thank you very much!
Dr. Sabine Ernsting, Adelaide, South Australia - Bhutan & Myanmar, 2018

So many highlights – favorites include Cape of Good Hope, Table Mountain, Kapama Game Reserve – because of excellent game rangers and trackers – saw the big 5 and so much more. Our local escort – excellent!!! Bus drivers also excellent. Coaches comfortable – great bonus to be able to charge cell phones inside buses. Bottom line – Awesome experience!!"
Dr. Cinda Lee, Toronto, ON - South Africa, 2018

"I found this to be a very well organized trip. It exceeded my expectations. I'd like to repeat it, but I'll join your other trips instead. Too much to see and to learn in this world."
Dr. Kas Tuters, Toronto, ON – Bali, 2018

"I totally loved Singapore and Malaysia. The local escorts were honestly a ten star. There was nothing they would not do for us".
Dyana Driscoll, Toronto, On. – Malaysia & Singapore, 2018

"This was an exceptional trip – thanks again! Everything was perfectly well orchestrated. It feels like we have been travelling for more than two weeks. We have learned so much. We will definitely recommend this trip to our friends. We have seen so many things. We have had exceptional guides. The group we travelled with was fantastic! Again, an amazing adventure!"
Dr. Collette Deslandres-Leduc, Montreal, Qc. – Ecuador and Peru, 2018

"Good guides, amazing sightseeing, loved the Patagonia cruise"
Dr. Chantal Breton, Kirkland, Qc. - Argentina & Chile, including Patagonia cruise, 2019

"Thanks for sending along (the song that you wrote about Bali) and for everything else. your stories, tips, enthusiasm, quiet presence and good company. This trip was certainly quite special. Please also pass on my thanks to Bonnie. Take good care"
Dr. Louise Lefort, Ottawa, On. – Bali, 2019

"This was an excellent unique tour combining both the cruise and a varied land component with spectacular sights ! Great group and local tour escort and cruise staff!"
Dr. Evelyn Brett, Toronto, On. – Iceland circumnavigation cruise and land, 2019

"Peter & Mary Bloch did an excellent job leading the group. The guides and others were very helpful and excellent - Amit 5*, plus Sheva and team. I thoroughly loved the trip. It exceeded my expectations. The people are so sweet and lots of smiles! This is a great place to visit."
Dr. Vickie Carducci, Kilworthy, On. - Northern India, 2019

"Malaysia was exhilarating! We had a wonderful, adventurous time, especially in the Borneo Rainforest. The local guides (Malek and Hirzan) were very friendly and helpful, very well versed in the history of Malaysia and we learnt a lot. The canopy walk was breathtakingly hair-raising. The tour was very well organized and the optional stay in Singapore was very relaxing. We look forward to more of your tours in the future".
Dr. Shiraz Walji, Calgary, AB - Malaysia & Singapore, 2019

"Fantastic trip – well organized, packed with loads of things to do and see – but did not feel 'superficial'. Just loved the opportunity to do and see so much. The group was fantastic – made new friends. Ian was a great tour leader"
Dr. Lorraine Manzig, Toronto, ON – Ecuador & the Galapagos, 2019

"Your tours are great. Thanks for the experience!"
Dr. Ikenna Ezeilo, Lethbridge, On. – South East Asia, 2020

"We enjoyed our experience in Iceland. Rachel and Joel (Kassner) do a great job as group leaders."
Dr. John Britt, Winston Salem, NC - Iceland circumnavigation cruise and land, 2022

"Fun, food, fellowship, culture, history, knowledge, perspectives, some ailments & mishaps — all packed in 12 days. Thanks everyone for enriching Kitty & my life! This is by far the most magical CME trip we've ever had for the past 3 decades! 🤗🤗"

Dr. Wing Lim, Sherwood Park, AB - Spain Gourmet tour, 2022

"We are having a fantastic time.
Great group - have made many new friends.
We are ecstatic to be here.
(our local tour escort) Malik is a kind and patient person who gives 110% of himself - he truly goes above and beyond to make sure everyone is happy.
Thank you. Thank you Thank you."
Drs. Loraine Manzig and Kevin Sliwowicz, Toronto, On. - Malaysia & Singapore, 2022

"Excellent guidance and interesting sites. Sahara desert trip was fantastic - really enjoyed the drive out over the dunes - camel ride excellent ! Felt safe at all times, including in the cities. A very good cultural experience leading to a great appreciation of this beautiful country".
Dr. Les Marien, Orangeville, On. - Morocco, 2022

"Need another vacation after this trip as we saw so much! The group was fantastic and fun to be with. We enjoyed everyone's company!"
Dr. Nihad Ali-Ridha, Toronto, On. – Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos, 2023

"Thank you so much for arranging this very special adventure.
It was wonderful! I so wish I had done it sooner so I could do it again.
Our local tour escort (Dion) was so knowledgeable, willing to share the history of the country in a way that helped us understand the WHY as well as the WHAT of the history of that breathtakingly beautiful country while he made us each feel welcome and valued as visitors. He obviously loves his homeland and has reason to do so.
The group was very compatible and new friendships were made. Caroline was very efficient".
Dr. Pat Barry, Burlington, On. – South Africa, 2023

"The Japan experience ranks among the very best offered by DoT - seamlessly blending the country's rich history and culture with outstanding cuisines and activities. The farewell Kimono dinner with Geisha entertainment was particularly noteworthy as well as the beauty of the Five Lakes region, majesty of Mt. Fuji, the ryokan experience and the many beautiful Japanese gardens and historic sites! Outstanding experience!"
Dr. Bruno Salena, Ancaster, On.- Japan, 2023

"We enjoyed this trip very much and the effort all you put into getting it together. We enjoyed the cultural aspect of the food. The guides were superb. We appreciate our Canadian colleagues and felt we were warmly welcomed. Thanks for putting on an A++++ trip".
Dr. David Trask, Medford, OR – Japan, 2023

"Great organization. Fantastic content with a well-balanced program. The entire group was very cordial. We all had a great time immersed in the Japanese culture and food. Thanks Doctors-on-Tour – a great way to transform the necessary (CME) to a pleasant activity."
Dr. Michel Laverdiere, Pointe Claire, QC – Japan, 2023

"It was a wonderful trip. Japan is a beautiful country with beautiful people. Thank you Shioji and Carina for taking such good care of us. Shioji is a wonderful guide. Thank you to all our fellow travelers. It was a real pleasure meeting all of you and hope to see you again on a future Doctors-on-Tour trip"
Dr. Tsing Wong, North Bay, On. – Japan, 2023

"A great and most enjoyable trip! Shioji made it."
Dr. Martin McIntyre, Brantford, On. – Japan, 2023

This was an excellent trip – my 2nd time with Doctors-on-Tour to Iceland and I would do it again! I enjoyed seeing a few new locations and different restaurants (thanks to Thordis). I can't recommend this trip highly enough! As all of your tours have been, it was well planned, well organized and very good value. Thanks so much. See you next year in Japan!
Dr. Mary Bruckschwaiger, London, On. - Iceland Circumnavigation Cruise and Land, 2023

And finally a ChatGPT “testimonial” – fully endorsed by our inaugural May 2023 Japan group members...

A journey to Japan, a doctor's delight,
Tokyo, Hakone, Mt. Fuji in sight,
Takayama, Kanazawa, and Hiroshima too,
A kaleidoscope of colors, a vibrant view.

We tasted cuisines, a variety on the plate,
Kaiseki, okonomiyaki, yakitori, and great,
Vegetarian delights, a feast for the soul,
A journey of flavors, a culinary goal.

We visited hospitals and nursing homes,
Learned acupuncture, meditation, and Shiatsu tones,
Bonsai and gold leaf, tea ceremonies too,
A culture so rich, a beauty anew.

Shioji, the guide, with passion and humor,
Shared her knowledge, a cultural tumor,
Deeply ingrained in the soul of this land,
A beauty so pure, so perfectly grand.

Carena and Pauline, worked tirelessly,
Coordinating hotels, meals, and transportation wisely,
Adjusting schedules to the weather's call,
Making it all happen, so easy for all.

Memories we leave, beautiful and cherished,
A journey so divine, so perfectly nourished,
The soul of Japan, now etched in our hearts,
A journey so pure, a new life starts.

ChatGPT – Japan, 2023



And about your Group Leaders and Medical Director, Dr. Steve, and Marg, Szarka (Hamilton, On.)

"Steve and Marg were terrific - went above and beyond their roles to ensure that we were all taken care of and happy"
Dr. Gail Neild, Woodbridge, On. – Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos, 2016

"Steve and Marg were great tour leaders"
Mary Nelson (Pharmacist), Ancaster, On. - Ecuador & the Galapagos (and Peru), 2016

"Steve and Marg were wonderful leaders – competently handled any issues that arose and were very supportive of the group members"
Dr. Xenia Kirkpatrick, Toronto, On. – Eastern Europe, 2017

"Thanks to Marg and Steve for their kindness, help and leadership"
Dr. Chantal Breton, Kirkland, Qc. - Eastern Europe, 2017

"Brenda and I had a great trip - Steve and Marg (the group leaders) were GREAT!"
Dr. Louis Fields, Toronto, On. - South Africa, 2018

"Steve and Marg did a great job"
Dr. Mark Saffer, Toronto, On. – South East Asia, 2020

"Dr. Steve and Marg Szarka were great leaders, very patient"
Dr. Raymond Leduc, Montreal, Qc – South East Asia, 2020

"Steve and Marg Szarka - Best group leaders EVER we were very thankful for them"
Dr. Luis Baptista - Edmonton, AB - Morocco, 2022

"Steve and Marg were great and did a fantastic job!"
Dr. Gary Fullerton, Woodstock, On. - Morocco, 2022

"Steve and Marg Szarka did an amazing job! Thank you! They were very attentive and lots of fun... the BEST!"
John & Iris Krawchenko, Hamilton, On. - Morocco, 2022



Doctors-on- Tour – Ecuadorian Amazon



Doctors-on-Tour - India



Doctors-on-Tour – Spain



Doctors-on-Tour - Chile & Argentina



Doctors-on-Tour – South East Asia



Doctors-on-Tour – China

The fine print...

Please take the time to read and understand the Terms and Conditions of booking set out below prior to booking a tour with us.

The Terms & Conditions contained herein are the terms under which Doctors-on-Tour and on-Tour (being operating brands of Britcan International Consulting (B.I.C.) Inc. and together, for the purposes of these Terms & Conditions, being referred to collectively as DOT/OT/BIC) accepts reservations. Our liabilities are limited. When you make a payment of deposit and/or final payment, it is also an acknowledgement of receipt and acceptance of these Terms and Conditions.

1. RESERVATIONS & DEPOSIT: Early reservations are recommended to guarantee your reservation as several of the accommodation providers with which we make arrangements on your behalf have limited capacity. All services are strictly on a request basis, both for air travel and land requirements and subject to availability of seats and hotel/lodge/camp rooms and cruise cabins. A guaranteed non-refundable deposit of \$500 per person (with the exception of \$800 per person for Morocco and \$1,000 for Japan programs; \$700 per person for programs which include a cruise component, \$1,000 per person for Iceland cruises), together with the applicable travel insurance premium, is required with your reservation request. Tour extensions and, where applicable, seat upgrades in aircraft cabin categories higher than economy, are also subject to additional non-refundable deposits as detailed in each specific program's brochure. Reservations made for travel within 95 days (105 days for programs which include a cruise component) of the travel date will require full payment at the time of reservation. Certain non-standard arrangements may require higher deposit and the same will be advised to you at the time of booking. Please be aware that some airfares (outside of our group air blocks) require full payment at time of booking and will be advised to you accordingly at the time of your booking confirmation.

2. FINAL AND/OR BALANCE DUE PAYMENT: Guaranteed payment of all balances due is no later than 95 days (105 days for programs which include a cruise component, 125 days for Morocco programs) prior to departure date. If payment of the balance due is not received by the stipulated date, we reserve the right to cancel your reservation without refund of deposit.

3. CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: Visa & MasterCard credit cards are accepted as form of payment. We do accept any other kinds of cards, including either American Express or Diners Club. Your online authorization by way of our Online Registration Form acts as your approval for the credit card provided as part of your registration to be charged for both the initial deposit (and travel insurance premium, where applicable) as well as the future balance payments on the date they become due, together with any other charges due relating to the booking that have been requested by you in writing (including by current or future electronic mail communication). For registrations that are not received via our Online Registration Form, but instead are forwarded to DOT/OT/BIC by mailing, faxing or e-mailing a scanned completed copy of our (non-online) Registration Form, your signature on such (non-online) Registration Form verifies your approval for your credit card to be charged. No services will be provided without receipt of either the authorized Online Registration Form or the duly signed (non-online) Registration Form. Third party payments may have restrictions.

4. CANCELLATIONS & CHANGES: The deposit amounts (for both the main tour and any optional extensions reserved), as well as any travel insurance premiums paid, are 100% non-refundable and non-transferable. Cancellation penalties for bookings cancelled by the client after the final balance due date (95 days before departure; 105 days before departure for programs which include a cruise component; 125 days for Morocco programs) are as follows: 95 – 61 (105 - 61 days for programs which include a cruise component) days before departure – 25% of total price paid; 60 – 31 days – 50% of total price paid; 30 days or less – 100%. Our Morocco programs have different cancellation penalties after the balance due date, as follows : 125 – 91 days before departure – 20% of total price paid; 90 – 61 days – 35% of total price paid; 60 – 31 days – 50% of total price paid; 30 days or less – 100%. (Notwithstanding the foregoing, any domestic Canada flight purchased as an additional service to the advertised package is 100% non-refundable irrespective of the date of cancellation). If payments are not received by their due dates, we reserve the right to cancel the booking without further notice. Bookings are non-transferable There will be no refund for unused land arrangements after departure from North America. In the event of the cancellation by DOT/OT/BIC of any or all components of the travel services offered herein, DOT/OT/BIC will offer either a refund, or future travel credit, depending on the situation with our supplier partners subject to any specific penalties relating to airline seats that would be out of our control and would obviously be dependent upon the air ticket conditions. Irrespective of whether a tour booking is cancelled by the client or if any or all components of the travel services are cancelled by DOT/OT/BIC, airfares may be subject to different rules and cancellation fees including some airfares may be fully non-refundable once the booking is confirmed regardless of when it was made including upgraded air cabin classes (ie premium economy, business and first class cabins) which are subject to different rules and cancellation fees based on the individual fare class in which the seats are purchased.

5. TRAVEL INSURANCE: To protect against cancellation charges, we strongly recommend purchasing Cancellation Protection and Travel Interruption Insurance. In the event of illness, medical and hospital expenses are the traveler's responsibility and no refunds will be made, partial or total, for the purchased tour. We strongly urge that you purchase either the Non-Medical Inclusive insurance (ie Cancellation Protection and Travel Interruption Insurance), All Inclusive insurance (Non-Medical coverage plus health coverage), or the Premium Protection Plan insurance package (All Inclusive coverage with higher coverage limits) offered by DOT/OT/BIC through Manulife Insurance. COVID-19 is currently viewed as a pre-existing situation by all insurance companies, including Manulife Insurance, and therefore is an exclusion under those policies that include health insurance, ie All Inclusive and Premium Protection Plan insurance packages. For coverage relating to COVID-19 health claims while on your tour, Manulife offers separate coverage, ie COVID-19 Pandemic Travel Insurance. Some countries may require proof of medical insurance, including specifically for COVID-19.

6. TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION, VISA & OTHER IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS: A Canadian citizen must be in possession of a passport that must remain valid for a minimum of 6 months from the date of conclusion of their journey for all destinations offered with the exception of New Zealand, Spain/Portugal and countries on our Eastern Europe program where the passport must remain valid for a minimum of 3 months from the date of conclusion of their journey. Tour participants must also ensure that they comply with all visa and health requirements of countries they intend to visit.

For Canadian citizens, a tourist entry visa (or, in some cases, a reciprocity fee) is required for entry into the following destinations offered by DOT/OT/BIC -

- Bhutan, Brasil, China, India, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, Vietnam (tourist entry visa, or a visa pre-approval letter in some cases, must be obtained prior to departure from Canada), Cambodia, Laos, Zambia (tourist entry visa may be obtained upon arrival in the destination)
- A tourist entry visa is not required for entry into Argentina, Bali (Indonesia), Chile, Ecuador, Iceland, Japan, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Spain and any country on our Eastern Europe program.

Non Canadian citizens may have different requirements. It is the passenger's responsibility to ensure that all his or her passport, visa and mandatory health vaccination requirements for entry into the country are met and the cancellation penalties referred to above will apply if a passenger is not allowed into the destination country (or determines in advance of departure that he will not be allowed into the destination country) due to lack of proper documentation including, but not limited to, passport, visa, customs, health or currency provisions required by the destination country thus preventing him from participate in the tour.

While COVID-19 remains an ongoing issue, some countries may introduce specific medical requirements for entry which may completing medical wellness declarations upon arrival and/or proof of a negative COVID-19 test and/or proof of having received an approved COVID-19 vaccination. Proof of medical insurance, including specifically for COVID-19, may also be required. As regulations and requirements continue to change by country, we will notify you of any specific necessary requirements for your destination closer to departure.

Final tour documents consisting of detailed tour itinerary, vouchers, and airline tickets will be forwarded approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure subject to receipt of final payment.

7. PRICING POLICY: Accommodations and services at the destination are contracted in local currencies and/or US Dollars. Due to frequent fluctuations in currency exchange (as well as other factors beyond our control including, but not limited to, fuel costs, transportation taxes and airport and local surcharges), prices are subject to change with or without notice and surcharges may apply for which we would endeavor to inform you as soon as possible. However, once we have received your final payment we would either waive any price increase or allow you to cancel your booking without penalty.

8. UNUSED PORTION OF THE TOUR: No refund will be made for any unused accommodations, missed meals, transportation segments, cruise portions, sightseeing tours or any other service. Such unused items are neither refundable nor exchangeable.

9. ACCOMMODATIONS: We use a variety of accommodations on our programs with many of our properties specifically chosen to reflect the local style and culture of the region. Our rating system reflects the majority of the accommodations throughout each program but some variety can occur. Ratings are based not only on room quality but also on facilities and location. Accommodation ratings in overseas destinations outside of Canada are an arbitrary measure and their definition from country to country can differ slightly as well as not always being consistent between individual properties in that particular destination nor are they necessarily comparable to an equivalent rating in North America. Rooms are assigned by the respective supplier(s) on a run-of-the-house basis, in category (ies) as specified in the itinerary and the right is reserved to substitute properties/hotels/lodges/camps/cruise/ships as conditions warrant such change for reasons beyond our control. Accommodations on twin occupancy basis, is provided at the properties/hotels/lodges/camps/cruise ships as specified or similar. Single room supplements apply to persons occupying sole use of a room/cabin but travelling with other passengers on the same tour and sharing transport cost on transfers, game drives, coach tours, sightseeing and excursions. Quoted single room rate does not necessarily mean single occupancy of a double room, as several of the establishments offered have especially designed single occupancy units.

10. SINGLE PASSENGERS TRAVELLING TOGETHER: If you are travelling with a companion and each paying separately the regular each of two double sharing accommodation rate and your companion decides to cancel, the remaining travelling passenger will be responsible for either finding a replacement travelling companion to take the cancelled passenger's place or must pay the single supplement and travel on a single basis.

11. AGE & HEALTH REQUIREMENTS:

Minimum Age: The minimum age for the majority of our tours is 12 at the time of travel.

Maximum Age: We have no upper age limit for our tours though we inform you that our tours may include some components for which group members need to be in good physical condition in order to be able to participate. We will provide details on mandatory and recommended health requirements but it is your responsibility to ensure that you obtain proper and detailed medical advice at least 6 weeks prior to travel for the latest health requirements and recommendations for your destination and how they impact your own personal health situation.

12. MEALS & BEVERAGES: Meals as included on our itineraries are either buffet meals and/or table d'hôte. Meals ordered through room service are not included and must be paid directly to the establishment. Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, and bottled water are included only where indicated on the itinerary. Unless specifically mentioned in your itinerary, all drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) are to be purchased and paid directly to the establishments.

13. OPTIONAL TOURS & EXCURSIONS AND TOUR EXTENSIONS: It is our intent to operate any optional tours & excursions and tour extensions on a private group basis. However, should the number of participants be of an insufficient level, we reserve the right to either -

- (1) add a surcharge to the previously stated selling price to be able to still offer the extension on a private basis or
- (2) operate any individual tour on a shared basis with other non-group participants or
- (3) cancel the tour and provide a full refund of all monies paid.

No refunds can be provided for cancellation of any tour by the client while in the destination.

14. SPECIAL REQUESTS: While we will make every effort to accommodate special requests, eg., room/cabin locations, adjoining rooms, non-smoking rooms, bed preferences, special dietary meal requests, these cannot be guaranteed and DOT/OT/BIC cannot be held responsible if such requests cannot be fulfilled. Requests for upgrading rooms/cabins are subject to additional charges. Any deviations to the standard program arrival and departure flight dates should be notified to us by separate e-mail at the time of booking and are subject to availability and also any applicable flight class supplement.

15. SEATING ASSIGNMENT ON FLIGHTS: Our air arrangements are made via group contracts with the airlines and are therefore subject to more restrictive airline Terms & Conditions and policies than for seats purchased individually from airline web sites. If you have a particular seat request, we will do our best to fulfill it subject to the policies of the airlines. Certain airlines assign group seating automatically for which the specific location within the group block is out of our control and to which the airlines do not provide access for us to change specific seat locations; and several airlines do not allow for specific advance seat assignment at all in which case specific seats will be assigned at airport check-in.

16. DOCUMENT DELIVERY: Your travel documents will be sent to you approximately 3 weeks prior to departure. For bookings received within 3 weeks of departure, express delivery of documents will require a courier delivery fee of \$30 to cover extra handling and processing. Additional courier charges will apply for all residents outside of Canada, irrespective of when the booking is made.

17. CONSUMER PROTECTION: DOT/OT/BIC are licensed under the Ontario Government Ministry of Consumer & Corporate Relations, Travel Industry Act 1974, Registration No. 50009110. The Act is administered by the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO), the government regulated body which is responsible for enforcing and monitoring the Travel Industry Act, including the protection of advance monies paid to its registrants by consumers. More information about TICO is available at <http://www.tico.on.ca/>

18. NOTICE TO TRAVELLERS: Canadians enjoy a living standard which is among the highest in the world. In other countries, the uninterrupted supply of water and electricity, local health conditions, levels of security and standards of food and beverages may sometimes differ from those enjoyed at home. Illness or inconvenience resulting from the services provided or omitted at the destination are outside the reasonable control of DOT/OT/BIC who bear no responsibility for such illness or inconvenience. DOT/OT/BIC cannot accept responsibility for the behavior of other guests/groups nor the unlikely event of the withdrawal of services or facilities due to local cultural and political events, or strikes.

19. ACCEPTANCE OF RISK:

You acknowledge that participation in overseas travel involves a degree of personal risk and that you may be visiting places where the political, cultural and geographical attributes present dangers and physical challenges greater than those present in our daily lives. You acknowledge that you are choosing to travel at a time where you may be exposed to epidemics and/or pandemics including, but not limited to, the COVID-19 virus. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure your safety and may require you to follow additional safety protocols on your trip.

We use information from government foreign departments and reports from our own contacts in each destination, including our local destination supplier partners, assessing whether the itinerary should operate. However, it is also your own responsibility to acquaint yourself with all relevant travel information, including applicable health and safety risks and the nature of your itinerary. You acknowledge that your decision to travel is made in light of consideration of this information and you accept that you are aware of the personal risks attendant upon such travel. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we accept no liability in relation to these additional risks.

20. FORCE MAJEURE: DOT/OT/BIC shall not be liable for any claims, losses, damages, costs, expenses, delays or loss of enjoyment, of any nature or kind whatsoever, resulting from events beyond our or a supplier's reasonable control, including but not limited to acts of God; war; civil commotion or insurrection; riot; blockade or embargo; fire; explosion; breakdown; union dispute, strike, lockout or other labor disputes or disruptions; earthquake; epidemic, pandemic or other health emergency; flood; windstorm or other extreme weather event; lack or failure of courses of supply; passage of any law, order, proclamation, regulation, restraint, ordinance, demand, requisition or requirement or any other act of any government authority, whether or not foreseeable, which would make it dangerous or not viable for a trip to commence or continue.

21. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES: DOT/OT/BIC makes arrangements with a network of third party suppliers, ie., airlines, tour operators, ground handlers, accommodation providers, cruise companies, activity providers, coach and transfer companies, car rental companies, tour and local guides, government agencies, and other independent contractors and individuals to provide you with the travel services and other services you purchase. Although we take care in selecting these third party suppliers, we have no control over them and, therefore, cannot be responsible for their acts or omissions. In the unlikely event that a particular hotel / lodge / cruise ship described in this brochure is not available we reserve the right to provide an alternate hotel / lodge / cruise ship of the equivalent standard. We also reserve the right to substitute another airline if the particular airline described in this brochure is not available.

The travel services provided by DOT/OT/BIC are subject to the applicable provincial Travel Industry Acts and Regulations and are subject to the conditions imposed by our third party suppliers and their liability is limited by their tariffs, conditions of carriage, tickets and vouchers and international conventions and agreements.

DOT/OT/BIC shall not be responsible for any loss, damage or injury, whether physical or mental, or to property, resulting from any delay, substitution or deficiency of quality of equipment or service, or any act, omission, negligence or commission of any party supplying any of the services or accommodation herein, its agents, servants, employees, subcontractors or for any claims for such loss, damage, or injury, whether physical or mental, arising therefrom, or from any cause that arises by reason of actions of parties other than DOT/OT/BIC. In the event that it becomes necessary or advisable for the comfort or well-being of the passengers, or for any reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to DOT/OT/BIC. The right is reserved to withdraw any or all tours should conditions warrant, also to decline to accept or retain any passengers as members of the tours. DOT/OT/BIC can assume no responsibility for lost tickets or coupons. The liability of DOT/OT/BIC for any loss, damage or injury, whether physical or mental, arising from its own acts, omissions or negligence, is limited to the price of the services purchased.

22. SEVERABILITY: In the event that any term or condition contained in these Terms & Conditions is unenforceable or void by operation of law or as being against public policy or for any other reason then such term or condition shall be deemed to be severed from this contract or amended accordingly only to such extent necessary to allow all remaining terms and conditions to survive and continue as binding.

23. PRIVACY POLICY: Any personal information that we collect about you will be handled in accordance with our Privacy Policy and may be used for any purpose associated with the operation of a trip. In making this booking you consent to this information being passed on to the relevant persons such as our agents, service providers or other suppliers to enable us to operate the trip or, if permitted by any relevant e-marketing spam laws, to send you marketing material in relation to our events and special offers.