

JapanQuest Journeys *Bespoke Luxury Journeys to Japan*

JapanQuest Journeys, the premier destination management company for Japan, **welcomes luxury travelers back as Japan's doors open once again.**

Important Travel Information from JapanQuest Journeys' Tokyo Office

Most of Japan's major tourist areas, transportation systems and food supplies were unaffected by the earthquake and tsunami and are safe and fully available for travel and enjoyment.

The U.S Department of State has downgraded its travel alert stating that health and safety risks are low and do not pose significant risks outside a defined 50 mile/80 kilometer radius around the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant which lies approximately 185 miles/300 kilometers north of Tokyo. Other governments have also updated their travel advisories to more accurately reflect the status of the country in terms of safety and security.

The Japan National Tourism Organization has resumed promoting tourism to Japan.

Read More Below: Japan Travel in Perspective where **JapanQuest** Journeys provides highlights of Japan's demographics and geography along with the proximity of major tourist destinations.



If one were to overlay a chart on a map of Japan encompassing the predominant destinations that travelers traditionally visit, it would include Tokyo then on through Nagano to the western coastline to Kanazawa and throughout the southern, western and eastern regions stretching to the island of Kyushu. In the north, tourism would be focused on the island of Hokkaido. These destinations are far from the impacted areas in Tohoku including the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant.

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On the Ground from Tokyo

By Philip Rosenfeld
Managing Director and Co-Founder

A sense of normalcy has returned to most of Japan. In the days and weeks following the earthquake and tsunami that struck the Tohoku region of northern Japan on March 11th, a feeling of self-restraint prevailed as a nation came together to lend its support to those individuals affected by the disaster. This support will of course continue in the months and years ahead. However, there is a sense throughout Japan that it is time to move forward, for people to return to their daily routines as a spiritually strong and economically reinvigorated nation is what is needed most to rebuild the lives of those individuals in the affected areas.

People are once more dining out with many restaurants in Tokyo and other areas full with customers and Japanese will again be traveling domestically as the Golden Week holiday begins next week. Professional baseball, which proved to be cathartic in the United States in the wake of 9/11, is underway and people are taking time to enjoy themselves. In essence, the Japanese people have realized that returning to their normal lives is the best way for them to help their fellow citizens in need and traveling to Japan is one of the primary means through which you too can help and show your support for the Japanese people.



Let *JapanQuest Journeys* expertly lead you any time of year on an unforgettable and compelling trip full of intimate discoveries through the real Japan, through the seasons of a country traditional yet modern, and rich in scenic beauty and cultural heritage.

Why Japan

By *JapanQuest Journeys*

Japan never ceases to surprise.

Start planning now for your extraordinary journey and see what Japan has to offer in the upcoming seasons!

Well shielded from superficial observations, the true nature of this country reveals itself in the small traditional neighborhoods and restaurants tucked away in the backstreets of **Tokyo's** mix of contemporary and eclectic skyscrapers, in the cobblestone alleyways of old **Kyoto** and in the dim light of early evening in **Nara's** 1,000 year old temples.

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In **Spring** the air is thick with the sweet scent of cherry blossoms that pervade every corner of **Kyoto**, Japan's ancient capital. The ocean of pink blooms covering the slopes of the Eastern Hills lightly sway in the cool breeze entralling passers-by with their transient beauty, and inviting them to follow the trail of the blossoms through countless weather-beaten temple gates and the beautiful gardens of royal villas hidden behind tall walls.



The trickling sound of water from a nearby well soon opens your senses to the realm of the mysterious beauty of a rock garden. Holding your gaze, it makes you forget the time, holding tight onto the secrets of its creator. The muffled murmur of Buddhist priests chanting sutras and the faint gong of the temple bell lets you slip into a dream of days long past when powerful samurai wooed beautiful ladies with a poem written in big bold strokes yet carrying ever so subtle a meaning.

Blink your eyes and you are back in the here and now of the old Zen temple that oozes the hundreds of years of history it has seen come and go. The samurai's calligraphy is still there for you to admire and an ageless priest whom until now went unnoticed will politely enquire as to whether he may explain the meaning behind this priceless piece of art unassumingly decorating the otherwise barren hall.



The chirping of cicadas in a small bamboo grove announces **Summer** has arrived, and Tokyoites seek respite from the heat in the cooler air of the mountain resort of **Hakone** whose hills and lakes offer a range of perfect vantage points for gazing at the majestic **Mt. Fuji**, Japan's most holy of peaks, which itself seems only a stone's throw from the nearby ocean. In Japan, the mountains and the sea keep each other company, never far apart, like lovers in a romantic haiku poem.

Small villages and towns scattered in the countryside, the old castle town of **Kanazawa** and the living museums of the old merchant quarters of **Kurashiki** and **Takayama** invite you to take a taste of Japan's countryside where centuries-old traditions have braved the unforgiving crucible of modernity.

Farmers still work their paddy fields in the early morning hours as they have done for eternity, and celebrated masters of the old "ways" such as tea and brush teach their eager young disciples the patience that sees generations working to perfect their chosen art.

When the thunderous crack of fireworks echo through the night, Obon has arrived and cheerful summer festivals are held up and down the country in honor of ancestral spirits. The deep don-don of taiko drums resonates in the air making your heart beat faster and in unison with this country. Men and women, children and grandparents, all dressed in traditional summer kimono dance themselves into a trance of carefree happiness that embraces everyone watching them.

Autumn arrives in but the blink of an eyelid to transform the foliage on mountain slopes into a blaze of red, orange and yellow, a celebration of colors that easily rivals the beautiful costumes

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on a Kabuki stage.

Nature is the setting for the mysterious beauty of **Miyajima Island in Hiroshima Bay** and the picturesque old farmhouses in the remote mountain village of **Shirakawa**, a UNESCO Heritage Site that ranks among the best in the world.



What better way to experience the warm hospitality of Japan's beautiful countryside, its exquisite cuisine and openhearted people, than to enjoy a stay in a ryokan or traditional inn. The simple yet sophisticated ikebana arrangement in the alcove of your tatami room perfectly mirrors the season as does the food, the freshest local fare prepared to the highest culinary standards, all tastefully arranged in many small bowls and dishes of delightfully crafted tableware. Each dish is a sophisticated work of art that pleases your eyes and regales your palate.

Winter approaches fast and its chilly winds draw you to the warmth of an old sake bar advertised by no more than a red lantern beside its door. The few locals in the tiny counter-only space welcome you like an old friend and sip by sip the hot sake warms your body and inspires you to try out a few words of Japanese with the friendly chef as you watch him prepare some morsels of unknown delicacies, each more delicious than the last.

Tokyo's busy districts and bustling shopping streets are ablaze with the lights of elaborate illuminations making you feel excited and stimulated all at once on these foreign shores. Follow fashionable young couples strolling down the Ginza or along Omotesando where Japan's exclusive department stores and chic boutiques tempt you to follow the sweet calls of a welcoming irraishimase that invite you to step inside and experience Japan's service culture at its finest.

Cold winter days are the perfect time to wander through the warm halls of **Tokyo's** first-rate museums holding invaluable collections of Japanese and world art. Immerse yourself in decoding the intricate gestures of antique images of the Buddha or admire the superb artistic expression and craftsmanship of rare Edo-era treasures.

Towards the end of the year the atmospheric hustle and bustle found in the shitamachi area's old shopping streets, with hawkers' stalls stockpiled with seasonal foods and traditional Shinto decorations, precedes the country's New Year's celebrations when the chiming of temple bells across the city calls worshipers to their local shrine or temple for an auspicious first visit.

JapanQuest Journeys will continue to keep you informed with valuable insight. We hope that you will have the chance soon to experience the very best of Japan. It is truly an extraordinary country.

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Japan Travel in Perspective

By: *JapanQuest Journeys*

Japan undoubtedly experienced one its most devastating natural disasters. However, one must understand the natural geographical relationships within the country and the impact, if any, to all regions.

Japan is a sprawling land, which if juxtaposed on a map of the United States would run along the entire east coast from Maine to northern Florida. Fortunately, the majority of its people and infrastructure were not physically harmed. Although deep sympathy is felt globally for the plight of those in the Tohoku region in the north, life is normal in the vast majority of the country; including transportation systems, food supplies and electrical grids.

Since most of Japan's regions were unaffected, major tourist areas are safe and fully available for travel and enjoyment. Let's put Japan and the ability to traverse the country in perspective. In order to do this, it is important to understand its major geographic and demographic characteristics.



Japan is an archipelago situated in northeastern Asia between the North Pacific and the Sea of Japan. The area of Japan is 145,897 square miles/377,873 square kilometers, nearly equivalent to Germany and Switzerland combined or slightly smaller than California stretching some 1,155 miles/2,994 kilometers. Japan consists of four major islands (North to south, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu), surrounded by more than 4,000 smaller islands.

Shown below are the four major islands, their locations and sizes.

Hokkaido (northern island)	32,000 square miles/83,000 square kilometers
Honshu (main island)	89,200 square miles/231,000 square kilometers
Shikoku (smallest island)	7,335 square miles/19,000 square kilometers
Kyushu	16,215 square miles/42,000 square kilometers

(southern island)

Japan's population is over 126 million people. Most Japanese reside in densely populated urban areas. The population of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area including the city, some of its suburbs and the surrounding area is approximately 12 million people with its other top 7 major cities ranging from 1.0 to 3.4 million people each.

If one were to overlay a chart on a map of Japan encompassing the predominant destinations that travelers traditionally visit, it would include Tokyo then on through Nagano to the western coastline to Kanazawa and throughout the southern, western and eastern regions stretching to the island of Kyushu. In the north, tourism would be focused on the island of Hokkaido. **These areas are far from the impacted area of Tohoku, which is approximately 239 miles/385 kilometers to the north of Tokyo. It is also distant from the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant which is 185 miles /300 kilometers away to the north as well.**

This geographical fact is important to consider when evaluating visits to Japan's major points of interest.

Tokyo Relative to Major Destinations

Major Destinations	Relationship to Tokyo	Distance From Tokyo
Hiroshima/Miyajima	South	422 miles/680 kilometers
Kamakura	South	28 miles/46 kilometers
Kanazawa	West	186 miles/299 kilometers
Kurashiki	South	347 miles/559 kilometers
Kyoto/Nara	South	230 miles/370 kilometers
Nagasaki (Kyushu)	South	593 miles/954 kilometers
Naoshima	South	337 miles/542 kilometers
Sapporo (Hokkaido)	North	518 miles/833 kilometers
Takayama	West	144 miles/232 kilometers

Japan is an amazing venue to journey to and those seeking to travel there should not be dissuaded by the events that transpired in the northern part of Honshu. Although tragic, virtually everywhere luxury travelers venture is unscathed and available for an extraordinary journey.