



Japan

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Why book with A&K

In-depth destination knowledge

- Local ground agent with 24 hour contact
- The very best English speaking guides
- Senior A&K sales consultants with a wealth of knowledge who have lived and worked in Japan
- Our Discover Japan itinerary offers something more in-depth & unusual for clients who wish to be more intrepid

Superior buying power

- Strong relationships with the best hotels and ryokans in the locations clients want to be
- Value adds in Tokyo at MO and Palace hotel
- 2019 Rugby World Cup ticket access

Concierge Rail Service

- A&K will pre-book Bullet trains & Japanese Rail Pass
- Hakone Free Pass
- PASMO Tokyo Pass

Seamless Experiences

- Our experienced consultants will suggest and arrange all of the finer details of what can be a complicated planning process especially when clients wish to travel off the beaten track
- We offer numerous authentic & unique experiences to get 'under the skin' of each location

Japan – When to go where

<i>When</i>	<i>Why</i>
<i>January</i>	During Japan's coldest month, visit Jigokudani Monkey Park to see snow-sprinkled macaque bathe in hot springs. In Kyoto, thousands of archers compete during the Festival of the Great Target. Wrestling fans should head to Tokyo for the Sumo New Year Basho.
<i>February</i>	Venture to the northern city of Sapporo for the week-long Snow Festival (Yuki Matsuri). The event occupies Odori Park and surrounding streets with exhibitions of huge ice sculptures, concerts and traditional performances.
<i>March</i>	As spring approaches, see the Omizutori Festival in Nara, which includes music, parades and fire shows. Or, near Nagoya, watch hundreds of loincloth-clad men drive out misfortune during the Naked Man Festival. Most memorable of all is the Honen Matsuri, a fertility festival which must be seen to be believed.
<i>April</i>	April ushers in Japan's famous cherry blossom season, and is the busiest time to visit, so book well ahead. Kyoto and Tokyo are popular spots to take in this sea of pink, while the mountain town of Takayama is lesser-known but more romantic for it. April also sees Takayama's Sanno Festival, where large ornate floats are paraded through the streets.
<i>May</i>	Golden Week, a series of national holidays at the beginning of May, can be a chaotic time to visit. However, the weather in Japan is at its best, and Kyoto's Aoi Festival – a Shinto procession of over 600 costumed people – is worth fighting through the crowds for.
<i>June</i>	The beginning of June is warm and sunny throughout the country. On the 15th, hundreds of priests in Koyasan celebrate the birth of Kukai, the grand master of Japanese Buddhism. However, during the latter half of the month, the rain arrives and the humidity increases.
<i>July</i>	As the heat rises, Japan's rainy season begins. Head into the mountainous prefecture of Gifu to hike the Nakasendo way, the former route of the samurai which passes lush vegetation, abundant wildlife and fine waterfalls. The Gion festival in Kyoto takes place every year, and involves a huge procession of unique floats.
<i>August</i>	August is hot and humid, but there's a lot to see. The nation observes the three-day Buddhist custom of 'Obon', during which the traditional dance of 'Obon Odori' is performed throughout Japan. The 6th marks the anniversary of the atomic blast in Hiroshima – here, thousands of paper lanterns are set adrift on the River Ota in a moving ceremony.
<i>September</i>	September remains humid, and though there can be storms, they tend to be utterly spectacular. Professional sumo tournaments are held in Japan six times a year, once in every odd-numbered month, and September sees one of the largest tournaments in Tokyo. This is also the season for whale watching in many of the southern cities.
<i>October</i>	The autumnal colours in the Japanese Alps make for a scenic dip in an <i>onsen</i> . The weather is usually sunny but cool enough for hikes and cycling. Kyoto's Jidai Festival on the 22nd sees over 2,000 people in ornate costumes depart from Kyoto Imperial Palace towards Heian Jingu shrine.
<i>November</i>	Things begin to cool down, though the weather remains dry and sunny. The first few days of November are the only days of the year you can enter the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, and there are a number of smaller festivals in the city. On the 15th, parents of three, five and seven-year-old children dress their kids in kimonos and take them for prayer at a nearby temple during Shichi-Go-San.
<i>December</i>	The weather in December is crisp and cold, but the snow-filled trees and frozen lakes are a sight worth seeing. The Daikon festival in Kyoto on the 9th and 10th celebrates winter food and is well worth a visit. The Japanese don't celebrate Christmas, but traditionally on New Year's Eve, the Japanese eat <i>toshikoshi soba</i> (buckwheat noodles) and temples all over ring their bells 108 times to welcome in the new year.



Cities

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Tokyo

The A&K way:

- Mysterious and exotic, exploring the world of a Geisha is fascinating. Enjoy dinner with her, learning about her craft. Then watch her dance whilst playing Japanese drinking games.
- Tsukiji fish market is a riot of flappingly fresh seafood. Buy fresh tuna and wasabi, then prepare a whole range of sense-dazzling sushi dishes. Lunch is of course included.
- Not to miss – a local sumo tournament where A&K can of course secure your clients tickets but we also gain exclusive entry into a Sumo Stable to watch the athletes during a morning's training session.

Where to stay:

- [Mandarin Oriental](#) – exclusive to A&K clients = complimentary wifi, room upgrade at check in and early check in and late check out (subject to availability)
- [Palace Hotel](#) - exclusive to A&K clients = complimentary breakfast



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Osaka

The A&K way:

- Visit Kuromon Ichiba market with its 170 stalls along 600 metres, here you can discover all kind of fruits, vegetables and other sweets staples to Japanese culture.
- During July each year is the Tenjin Matsuri festival ranked as one of Japan's top three festivals. A&K can offer a brilliant local guide who will really help to bring Japan's unique culture to life!
- Calling all foodie lovers, Osaka is a gastronomic paradise and with their own private food tour of Osaka's hot spots clients will discover the delicious wonders of Shinsekai!

Where to stay:

- St. Regis Osaka – offers the best 5* luxury in town.



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Hiroshima

The A&K way:

- Famous for its tragic history as the location of the atomic bomb in 1945 A&K can arrange for a private tour of Peace Park in the company of a veteran survivor.
- An experience in itself, a quick trip on Japan's famous bullet Train to Naoshima Art Island with a stay at Benesse House is well worth the visit – but book ahead.
- A quick boat trip to the wooded island of Miyajima for an incredible photogenic experience. Witness the 6th-century Floating Torii Gate, one of Japan's three 'most beautiful views'.

Where to stay:

- [Sheraton Grand Hiroshima Hotel](#) – Contemporary modern décor. All rooms have panoramic views over the city



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Countryside & Culture

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Hakone & Mount Fuji

The A&K way:

- In Hakone, enjoy a night in a ryokan for an authentic flavour of Japanese hospitality.
- Take advantage of both private and public onsen (hot springs) found in all the ryokan recommended by A&K.
- For active clients, during the summer months we can arrange a Fuji- San hike complete with guide.

Where to stay:

- [Ginyu Ryokan Hakone](#) – panoramic mountain views from a relaxing hot bath on your private balcony
- [Gora Kadan](#) - former retreat of the Kanin-no-miya, the youngest of the four branches of the Imperial Family of Japan
- [Hyatt Regency Hakone Resort & Spa](#) – western style rooms with its very own hot spring spa



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Kyoto

The A&K way:

- Take part in the ritual of preparing and drinking a traditional tea ceremony. Clad in a traditional Kimono, receive instruction from a tea master and sample revitalising teas.
- Avoid the hoards that arrives with the cherry blossom in April and May, book a private tour and avoid the masses. Must book minimum 6 months in advance.
- Although the Emperors residence itself is closed off to the public, we can arrange a private tour of the grounds.

Where to stay:

- [Four Seasons Kyoto](#) – perfectly positioned for exploring the historical and culturally rich city of Kyoto.
- [Ritz – Carlton](#) – home to Pierre Hermé, a renowned Parisian patisserie owner, serving a range of his signature desserts at La Bettolina Della Boutique.



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Takayama

The A&K way:

- On a tour discover this perfectly preserved old town, with its unique culture separate from the rest of Japan
- Visit one of the many sake breweries of which Takayama is famous due to the areas clean water sources.
- A visit during spring or autumn will allow clients to experience one of Japan's most beautiful festivals showcasing the region's history.

Where to stay:

- [Honjinhiranoya Kachuan Ryokan](#) – Perfect location to immerse yourself in Japanese culture
- [Hidatei Hanaougi](#) – home to one of the new natural hot springs in the area



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Beach

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Okinawa

The A&K way:

- Tune into a slower pace in life with white sandy beaches, warm waters and tropical fish of all shapes and sizes, with accommodation to suit all budgets.
- For clients who like to mix their beach breaks with activities, Okinawa's forest interior offers the perfect trekking terrain.

Where to stay:

- The Ritz-Carlton Okinawa – a five-star property boasting views of the South China Sea, providing guests with a warm Okinawan welcome.



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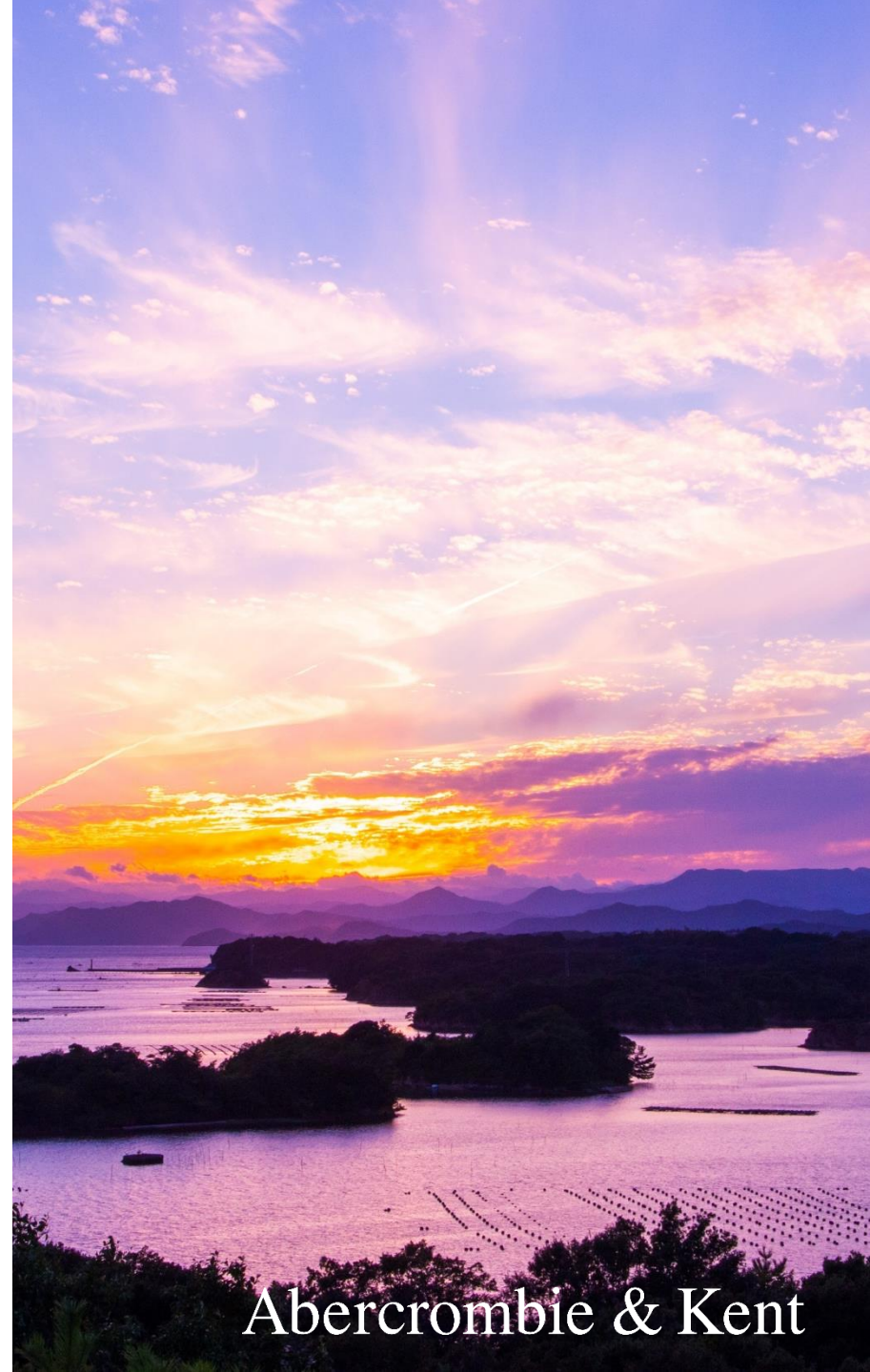
Shima Peninsula

The A&K way:

- The quieter and slightly cheaper alternative to Okinawa but with less beaches. The weather tends to be slightly more predictable to it's sandier neighbour.
- Sign-up to a tour that will reveal an area renowned for its natural beauty and introduce you to the mysteries of the Shinto religion.
- Ise-Shima National Park offers a hot spring sanctuary. Here the Bay of Pearls is famed for pearl cultivation and as one of the last remaining homes of the Ama female freedivers.

Where to stay:

- [Amanemu](#) – a luxury resort, decorated in an authentic local style, with onsen culture at its heart.



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Sample itineraries

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Sample itineraries

All A&K tailor-made itineraries can be adapted to your client's request.

Discover Japan: 14 nights from £4,445

Get off the beaten track and discover the wonders of Japan. Our 'Discover' itineraries allow the traveller to journey the lesser-known destinations and explore each country at their own pace.

Classic Japan: 12 nights from £5,550

In the company of their very own Japan tour guide, your client will be shown all the key highlights of this fascinating island. This itinerary is perfect for clients looking for a little more guidance on their travels whilst discovering the fascinating history surrounding the land of the rising sun.

Small Group – Japan: Temples, Shrines & Geisha: 10 nights from £5,795

Departure dates: January – April & September - December

Don't forget our extensive Small Group Journey portfolio. A tour of the Japan that still honours the old ways – wooden houses, raked Zen gardens, Buddhist temples, shinto shrines and districts in which geisha still glide along cobbled streets like moving works of art.

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An aerial photograph of a hillside covered in cherry blossoms in various shades of pink, red, and white. The background shows a dense green forest on a higher ridge under a clear blue sky. A large, semi-transparent AK logo is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Meet the team

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Rachel Uzzell

01247 547 822

Rachel's Top Tip

"The best way to travel around Japan is by bullet train but the language barrier can worry people. My biggest tip is not to panic when you arrive in a busy train terminal. Take your time, stop and wait for a minute and the boards will change from Japanese to English and you will be on your way!"



Annie Jensen

01247 547 842

Annie's Top Tip

"I recommend guests travel around Japan independently by train. It is a great way to keep the cost down and to get a real sense of the place. It does frighten some people a bit but Japanese public transport runs like clockwork and we can always arrange for knowledgeable guide to accompany clients on their first day to explain the transport system. We haven't lost anyone yet!"



Debbie Rawnsley

01247 547 843

Debbie's Top Tip

"Japan has so much to offer but it's important to manage client expectations. For example, we usually quote using public transportation rather than private vehicles as the cost for the cost of private is very high. In more remote places, the accommodation can be more basic with shared bathroom facilities, tatami mat flooring and futon bedding but the authentic experience is definitely worth it."



Thank you

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