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## GEEO ITINERARY

X-Japan 5/13/2024

### **Day 1: Tokyo Arrive in Tokyo at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

Arrive in Tokyo at any time. We recommend arriving a day or two early to fully explore this huge city. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference, overcome any jetlag, and avoid any disruption to your trip due to flight delays or cancellations. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Tokyo before the trip. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

### **Day 2: Tokyo Take a walking tour of eclectic modern Tokyo from the hub of Shinjuku to Shibuya through to Harajuku. The rest of the day is free for exploring more of the city.**

Your tour leader will lead the group on a walking tour of eclectic modern Tokyo from the hub of Shinjuku to Shibuya through to Harajuku. The rest of the day is free for exploring more of the city.

### **Day 3: Tokyo/Nagano Journey to Nagano, located in the Japanese Alps and host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics. Visit the world-famous Jigokudani Monkey Park and watch Japanese snow monkeys bathing in the natural hot springs.**

Today we board a bullet train and journey to Nagano, located in the Japanese Alps and host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics. We will visit the Jigokudani Monkey Park, where wild snow monkeys can be seen bathing in the natural hot springs. The pool where most of the monkeys soak is man-made, fed by the hot springs. Along the walking paths up to the pools other monkeys tend to stop and watch visitors curiously. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by bullet train

### **Day 4: Nagano Enjoy a day-trip to quaint Matsumoto and visit one of Japan's most treasured castles. Return to Nagano and explore historic Zenkoji Temple.**

Today we travel by local train for a day trip to quaint Matsumoto where we will visit one of Japan's most treasured castles. Amazingly, the castle still retains its original wooden interior and stone exterior. Explore this castle where 16th-century Samurai once roamed before venturing out with the group to wander Matsumoto's ancient streets and or dine in a traditional storehouse. We then return to Nagano and visit the Buddhist temple of Zenkō-ji, one of the last remaining pilgrimage sites in Japan. Built in the 7th century, the city of Nagano was built around the already standing structure. Approximate travel time: 3-4 hrs round trip by local train

### **Day 5: Nagano/Otsu (D) Travel to Otsu in Shiga prefecture. Settle in and relax with a stroll around the picturesque Lake Biwa before heading out to enjoy a delicious bowl of Ramen for dinner.**

Today we travel to Otsu in Shiga prefecture, located on the banks of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest freshwater lake. Settle in and relax with a stroll around this picturesque lake before heading out to enjoy a delicious bowl of Ramen for dinner. Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs by train

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**Day 6: Otsu/Hagi (B, D) Grab a quick breakfast before a long travel day. Arrive in Hagi, a former castle town that boasts feudal architecture. Meet your host family at a community homestay and get to know each other as you enjoy dinner together.**

Grab a quick breakfast before a long travel day. Please note that before leaving Ōtsu, you'll need to prepare your day pack/overnight bag for a two-night stay in Hagi, as your main luggage will be sent on to Tottori. Remember to include comfortable clothing for a cycling excursion and two nights at the homestay. In the late afternoon, arrive in the quaint city of Hagi, a former castle town that boasts feudal architecture. Take part in a welcome ceremony with the local residents. Then get to know a local family at this G Adventures for Good-supported community homestay in Hagi, a farming, fishing, and historical heritage town. In recent years, due to the rapidly aging population and limited income opportunities in many of the rural areas of Japan, many community members have had to leave Hagi in order to make a living. Learn about local history and customs, and enjoy a home-cooked meal with your hosts. Approximate travel time: 6.5 hrs by train

**Day 7: Hagi (B, D) Explore rural Hagi on a guided morning cycle. Enjoy free time to wander the narrow streets or opt to visit some of the beautiful old residences. Later return to your homestay and enjoy dinner with your host family.**

Explore rural Hagi on a guided morning cycle. Enjoy the slow pace of life as you pedal past the city's Tokugawa era architecture, and cycle along the Japanese Sea. Afterward, you'll have free time to wander the narrow streets or opt to visit some of the beautiful old residences which are open to the public. In the late afternoon, return to your homestay and enjoy dinner with your host family.

**Day 8: Hagi/Tottori (B) Bid farewell to your host family after enjoying breakfast together. Travel to Miho-misumi by train. Learn the art of making "washi," a Japanese paper, before continuing to the seaside town of Tottori.**

This morning you'll bid farewell to your host family after enjoying breakfast together. Later, travel to Miho-misumi by train, taking in scenic views along the way. In Miho-misumi, learn the art of making "washi," a UNESCO-recognized traditional Japanese paper, and take home your handmade washi as a memento. Then we board a train again and end our day in the seaside town of Tottori. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs total by train

**Day 9: Tottori/Kyoto Spend the morning exploring Tottori's scenic sand dunes. After, visit the local fish market and opt for a fresh seafood lunch. Later travel to Kyoto.**

Located along the coast of the Sea of Japan, the Tottori Sand Dunes (or "Tottori Sakyu") were formed thousands of years ago when sand was washed away from a nearby river. This morning we'll walk amongst the dunes and opt to climb one to take in scenic views of the coastline. Afterward check out Tottori's harbor fish market, home to fresh seafood and some of Japan's best crab. Walk amongst the stalls and watch the locals in action. Opt to try a tasty dish in the market's restaurant section. In the late afternoon, travel to Kyoto, the traditional heart of Japan. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by train

**Day 10: Kyoto Visit the iconic Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, famed for an impressive 10,000 red torii gates. This afternoon, enjoy free time in this picturesque city.**

We will start off the day with a visit to the Fushimi Inari shrine, located just outside of Kyoto. Walk under the thousands of iconic torii gates (as seen in the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*) and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere. The shrine itself is at the base of the Inari mountain but includes many trails up to smaller shrines in the area. Kyoto is home to over 2,000 temples, including some of the most magnificent in the

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country, dating back centuries. Use free time to continue exploring, the options are endless – the city also boasts museums, castles, and traditional gardens – or opt to visit neighboring Nara or Osaka.

### **Day 11: Kyoto Depart Kyoto at any time.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Kyoto at any time. We highly recommend extending your stay in Kyoto by at least one day or more to allow more time to explore this incredible city and take day trips to Osaka and Hiroshima (by Shinkansen). You may book post-trip accommodation at your hotel in Kyoto through us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.