

CRITERION  
travel

# Japan by Sea

## Land of the Rising Sun

aboard the 90-cabin *Heritage Adventurer*

With special guest speaker **Pico Iyer**

May 12–23, 2026



**Discover a Japan that few visitors see**—beginning with two days of sightseeing in Tokyo followed by an eight-night cruise through the Sea of Japan and the Inland Sea aboard the 140-passenger *Heritage Adventurer*. Experience it all, from the bustle of the big city to the tranquil historic quarters of Kanazawa and the island worlds of Miyajima and Sado. Excursions highlight both cutting-edge modern architecture and the ancient traditions of Japan, with visits to sacred temples and shrines, celebrated gardens and castles, and private cultural performances. Delve deeper into the culture during a performance of Kodo drummers on Sado Island, and optionally partake in a traditional tea ceremony in Kanazawa.

**Engage with expert study leaders** throughout this unique educational program and gain a better appreciation of Japan's historical and cultural significance through onboard lectures and informal discussions. Expert lecturers will include Professor Kathleen Ryor from Carleton College and art historian Kendall Brown from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. In addition, local English-speaking guides will accompany the group throughout the journey to lead excursions and answer questions from travelers.

An optional pre-trip extension to Kamakura and the hot springs resort of Hakone, and an optional post-trip extension to Kyoto and the ancient city of Nara, are also available.



To register online, visit:  
<https://dub.sh/2026japanCT>

# Featured Speaker



Special guest speaker **Pico Iyer** is the author of 17 books that have been translated into 23 languages, including the best-sellers *The Open Road*, *The Art of Stillness*, *The Half Known Life*, and *Aflame*. He and Hiroko, his Japanese wife, have been based in Japan for 38 years. He has published three popular books on his adopted home—*The Lady and the Monk*, *Autumn Light*, and *A Beginner's Guide to Japan*. Born in Oxford, England, he was educated at Eton, Oxford, and Harvard and served not long ago as Ferris Professor at Princeton. His five TED talks have received more than 11 million views, and he was delighted, along with Hiroko, to join a similar tour of Japan in 2024.

## Highlights

- ◆ Customize your experience with **excursion options in Tokyo** and throughout the program.
- ◆ Ride Japan's famed **high-speed bullet train** from Tokyo to Niigata.
- ◆ Try your hand at **taiko drumming** on remote **Sado Island**, home of the world famous Kodo drummers.
- ◆ Immerse yourself in local culture during a **traditional tea ceremony** in Kanazawa or a hands-on **wagashi** sweets workshop.
- ◆ Admire Japan's rich artistic heritage during an **optional full-day visit to Naoshima**, an island that has become a mecca for cutting-edge art.
- ◆ **Spend a day in South Korea** featuring a visit to Gyeongju, the ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom and a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- ◆ Marvel at **Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima** with its iconic red *torii*, a grand wooden gateway that appears to float on the sea at high tide.
- ◆ Take in the spectacular scenery of **Japan's Inland Sea** from the comfort of one of the many observation decks aboard *Heritage Adventurer*.
- ◆ Walk along the paths of Koraku-en, celebrated as **one of Japan's Three Great Gardens**.



KENROKU-EN



BULLET TRAIN



# Itinerary

Tuesday–Wednesday, May 12–13

## Home/Tokyo, Japan

Depart home on an overnight flight to Tokyo, Japan, arriving on May 13th. Upon arrival, join a group transfer to the hotel. The remainder of the day is free to rest, recover, and explore independently.

THE CAPITOL HOTEL TOKYU

Thursday, May 14

## Tokyo

This morning attend a welcome orientation and lecture, followed by a choice of two excursions. Opt to: 1) Visit the Meiji Shrine complex, located in a 175-acre forest; the Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art; and Tokyo's Aoyama district, notable for its modern architecture; or 2) See some of the vast collection at the Tokyo National Museum, boasting about 120,000 artifacts and pieces of art covering most of the country's long history, then visit Shunkaen Bonsai Gardens and Museum to learn about the ancient art of bonsai. Gather this evening for a festive welcome dinner featuring local entertainment.

THE CAPITOL HOTEL TOKYU (B,L,D)

Friday, May 15

## Tokyo/Niigata/Embark

Choose between two morning excursions: 1) Visit the Tsukiji fish market and the Kappabashi culinary district, a street almost

entirely populated by shops catering to the restaurant trade; or 2) Enjoy a guided tour through the Ginza district, Tokyo's most glamorous shopping district, including a visit to the iconic, 12-story Ginza Mitsukoshi department store. This afternoon board the Shinkansen, Japan's high-speed bullet train, for Niigata and upon arrival embark *Heritage Adventurer*.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,D)

Saturday, May 16

## Sado Island

Visit remote Sado Island, the home base for the famous *taiko* drumming group, Kodo (meaning "heartbeat"). Experience a private performance by some of the resident drummers, along with an interactive lesson and lecture on this ancient art form. Also explore historic Shukunegi, a picturesque fishing village of wooden houses, narrow alleys, and canals. This evening, attend the captain's welcome reception and dinner aboard the ship.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,R,D)

Sunday, May 17

## Kanazawa

Call at the refined artistic center of Kanazawa for a visit to Kenroku-en, considered to be one of Japan's top gardens. Excursion options include: 1)

Participate in a traditional tea ceremony at a classic Japanese teahouse before a visit to the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art; or 2) Join a *wagashi* (Japanese sweet) workshop and experience more traditional arts and crafts. Reboard *Heritage Adventurer* for a relaxing evening of cruising as the educational program continues.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,D)

Monday, May 18

## Matsue

Today choose from two morning excursion options: 1) Drive through lush countryside to the Adachi Museum of Art to explore its collection of modern Japanese works and exquisite, highly manicured gardens; or 2) Arrive in charming Matsue and visit Matsue Castle, one of the few surviving castles in Japan, built in 1611, followed by free time to stroll through Matsue's historic samurai quarter. Enjoy an afternoon at sea with lectures before dinner on board.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,D)

Tuesday, May 19

## Ulsan, South Korea/ Gyeongju

Arrive at the South Korean port of Ulsan, then drive inland to the city of Gyeongju, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the



HIROSHIMA



TOKYO - MEIJI SHRINE

capital of the Silla kingdom that ruled for 1,000 years. See the famous Flying Horse Tomb, one of the royal burial mounds, and enjoy a guided tour of the National Museum's highlights. After a traditional Korean lunch with entertainment, explore Bulguksa Temple, another UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Korea's most beautiful Buddhist temples, known for its intricate paintings and two 6th-century pagodas.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,D)

Wednesday, May 20

### Hiroshima, Japan

Following a morning of educational content at sea, call at Hiroshima in the afternoon. Visit the Peace Memorial Park and Museum, a place of remembrance, reflection, and education. Begin with a walk through the museum, a poignant tribute to the devastating impact of the atomic bombing during World War II and the subsequent efforts toward peace and nuclear disarmament. See the Atomic Bomb Dome, the only building left standing after the explosion, and present paper cranes at the Children's Peace Monument. The remainder of the day is at leisure for independent exploration.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,D)

Thursday, May 21

### Miyajima

Anchor off the coast of Miyajima Island and take a Zodiac ashore. Visit the 6th-century Itsukushima Shinto Shrine, a national treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its iconic brilliant red torii, a grand wooden gateway that appears to float on the sea at high tide. Enjoy free time to visit tiny temples and stroll through picturesque streets, or ride the gondola up Mount Misen for spectacular 360-degree views. This afternoon, relax and cruise through the scenic Inland Sea, dotted with small islands.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,D)

Friday, May 22

### Naoshima or Kurashiki/Okayama

Today opt for one of two excursion choices: 1) Visit captivating Naoshima Island, a mecca for innovative art and contemporary architecture, and tour some of its world-class museums, including the Chichu Art Museum, Benesse House Museum, and the Naoshima New Museum of Art; or 2) Explore the Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter in Okayama and wander the spacious Koraku-en Garden, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan. Over 300 years

old, this landscape garden is unique for its spacious lawns. Gather this evening for a talk by special guest speaker Pico Iyer, followed by the captain's farewell reception and dinner aboard ship.

HERITAGE ADVENTURER (B,L,R,D)

Saturday, May 23

### Osaka/Home

After breakfast, disembark *Heritage Adventurer* and join a group airport transfer for flights home, or begin the optional post-trip extension.

(B)

## Optional Extensions

May 9–13, 2026

### Kamakura and Hakone

Arrive early to visit Zen temples, bathe in natural hot springs, enjoy traditional multi-course meals, and see world-class art.

May 23–26, 2026

### Kyoto and Nara

Extend your stay to visit UNESCO World Heritage Sites, iconic bamboo groves, and masterful museums.

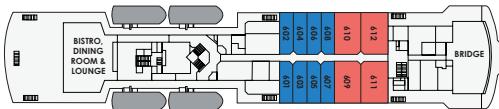
*Further information will be sent to booked participants.*

# Heritage Adventurer

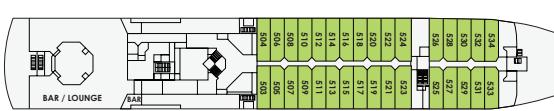


All 90 cabins aboard *Heritage Adventurer* offer living and sleeping areas with a king or two single beds, ample storage, a writing desk, and a modern ensuite bathroom. Public spaces and open decks abound, including two separate bar and lounge areas featuring 180-degree views and the open-topped Observation Deck for 360-degree views. Twin guest elevators provide easy access to all levels. Meals are served in the gourmet restaurant and in the indoor/outdoor bistro—both options offer plenty of seating and large picture windows. Additional amenities include an open-air saltwater pool that can be heated or chilled, a hot tub encased in glass for all-weather use, a dry-heat Finnish sauna, a European steam room, a well-equipped gym, and a spa.

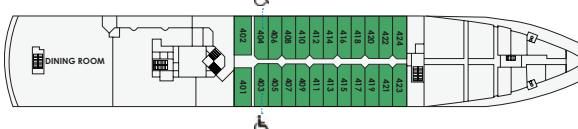
DECK 6



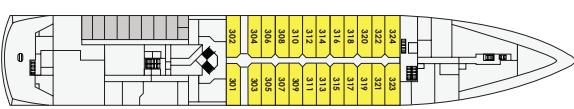
DECK 5



DECK 4



DECK 3



## Program Rates (per person)

CATEGORY		DOUBLE	SINGLE
1	DECK 3 STANDARD CABIN 237 sq ft; twins or king bed; two portholes	\$9,990	\$11,990
2	DECK 4 SUPERIOR CABIN 237 sq ft; twins or king bed; window	\$11,990	\$14,490
3	DECK 5 SUPERIOR CABIN 237 sq ft; twins or king bed; window	\$12,990	\$15,490
4	DECK 6 SUPERIOR CABIN 237 sq ft; twins or king bed; window	\$14,490	—
5	DECK 6 HERITAGE SUITE 475 sq ft; king bed; double windows	\$18,990	—

## General Information

### PROGRAM RATES INCLUDE

All accommodations, meals, and excursions as specified in the itinerary, including **two hotel nights and eight nights aboard *Heritage Adventurer*** • Tickets for Tokyo to Niigata bullet train • Comprehensive program of briefings, lectures, and presentations • Transfers for all participants on group arrival and departure dates •

**Gratuities to porters, wait staff, guides, drivers, and shipboard personnel for all group activities** • Entrance fees and port charges • Captain's welcome and farewell wine receptions • **House wine, beer, and soft drinks with all group lunches and dinners** • Complete packet of pre-departure information • Professional tour manager throughout the program • Expert local guides

### WHAT TO EXPECT

This a moderately strenuous program that is, at times, physically demanding and busy. Daily excursions involve up to one mile of walking at a time, often on uneven terrain. In some instances, elevators are unavailable,

and stairs may not have handrails. You will be required to remove your shoes while visiting temples, shrines, and a number of other sites. You will need to climb into and out of Zodiacs for an onshore excursion (there will be staff and crew members on hand to assist). Participants must be physically fit, active, and in good health.

### GROUP SIZE

This program can accommodate a total of 129 participants.

### AIR ARRANGEMENTS

U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program rates. Valerie Wilson Travel, Inc., can help with airline arrangements for this trip and can be reached at 877-376-1754. You are also welcome to book your air transportation through your local travel agent, an online travel site, or the airline of your choice. Further information about making flight arrangements will be sent to confirmed participants.



## **PROGRAM RATES DO NOT INCLUDE**

U.S. domestic and international airfare • Passport/visa expenses • Medical expenses and immunizations • Travel and trip cancellation insurance • Private transfers or airport transfers outside of group arrival and departure days • Excursions that deviate from the scheduled tour options • Airline baggage charges • Meals not specified in the itinerary; dishes and beverages not part of the included meals; liquor or soft drinks except as noted • Laundry or dry cleaning • Telephone and internet charges • Room service • Other items of a personal nature

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement. Information about optional trip cancellation insurance will be provided by Criterion Travel upon confirmation of your booking.

## **HEALTH**

All participants should be in good health and capable of keeping up with an active group of travelers. By forwarding the deposit for passage, the passenger certifies that he/she does not have any physical or other condition or disability that would create a hazard for him/ herself or other passengers.

## **A NOTE ABOUT RATES**

Tour rates are based upon current fuel prices, currency values, taxes, tariffs, and a minimum number of participants. While we will do everything possible to maintain the listed rates, they are subject to change. If there are significant changes, details and costs will be advised prior to departure.

## **ITINERARY CHANGES**

The itinerary presented for this tour is subject to modification and change by Criterion Travel. Every reasonable effort will be made to operate the program as planned; however, should unforeseen world events and conditions require the itinerary to be altered, Criterion Travel reserves the right to do so for the safety and best interest of the group. Any extra expenses incurred in this situation are the responsibility of the participant.

Complete Terms and Conditions including a Statement of Responsibility will be made available at time of registration, or in advance upon request. A signed "Terms & Conditions, Release from Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Clause" is required from each applicant prior to participation on the tour.

## **RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS**

A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to reserve space on this program. Reserve your space online at <https://dub.sh/2026japanCT>. For questions, please email Criterion Travel at [res@criteriontravel.com](mailto:res@criteriontravel.com). Final payment deadline is January 12, 2026. For those who register on or after January 12, 2026, full payment is due upon registration. Final payment may be made by check, wire transfer or credit card (credit card payments will incur a processing fee of 2%).

## **CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS**

Upon payment of the \$1,000 per person deposit, reservations are subject to the cancellation provisions set forth below and by which the passenger agrees to be bound. Cancellations shall not be effective until they are received in writing and confirmed by Criterion Travel. Deposits are refundable (less a \$250 per person administration fee) if written notice of cancellation is received within 30 days of reservation; after that, deposits are 100% nonrefundable. After final payment deadline of January 12, 2026, all payments are 100% nonrefundable, regardless of booking date. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. No refunds will be made for any part of this program on which you choose not to participate. NOTE: Criterion Travel, the tour operator does not accept liability for any airline cancellation penalties incurred with the purchase of non-refundable tickets.

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