

Japan Sacred Northern Lakes & Mountains Hiking

Spiritual Traditions & Hot Springs from Tokyo to Nikko

Thank you for checking out our adventures and for downloading this itinerary. Please note that this itinerary may be subject to change depending on the specific departure date. Be sure to check with us before scheduling any flights.

We love talking travel!
Contact us at info@mtsobek.com
or call **800-974-0300**



Feel the difference

with **Mountain Travel Sobek**

Unrivaled Expertise

MT Sobek started it all! Since our first Everest Base Camp trek in 1969, we've been leading award-winning adventures and building authentic connections in far-flung locations around the world. We were named Best Adventure Tour Company in 2022 by USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards.

Unique Trip Design

Our adventures are perfectly paced, with incredible attention to detail — the right mix of fun, learning, and challenge that guarantees lifelong memories. Plan nothing, enjoy everything. We take care of all of the logistics so that you can have more time to do what's most important: relax, take in the experience, and enjoy!

Small Groups

We keep our groups intentionally small — usually fewer than 10 people. This allows you a more intimate experience with the people and wildlife you encounter. With a smaller group size, we can take advantage of many unexpected invitations and opportunities that would be impossible with larger groups.





Leading the Way

World-Class Local Guides

Our knowledgeable and passionate expert guides effortlessly create an immersive local experience for you. They are trained to the highest professional standards and are at the heart of everything we do. They make it possible to meet the challenges of adventure travel, and help create lasting memories and lifelong friendships... we can confidently say our guides are the best in the business.





Why take this trip with us?

REASON 1

MT Sobek has been operating award-winning adventures in Asia since 1969, working with the best local guides to ensure an immersive and unforgettable adventure.

REASON 2

This well-paced 13-day hiking adventure takes you from Tokyo to Nikko, combining rewarding valley and mountain hikes with the wonders of cultural touring. Carry only your daypack on the trail!

REASON 3

Our local expert guides go the extra mile and are the perfect travel companions. Gain a unique understanding of the Japanese relationship with mountains and how this imbues Shintoism and the Shugendo faith.

At A Glance

ACTIVITIES

Moderately paced hikes up to 8 miles a day on paved and dirt trails, cultural touring, and scenic train rides. Includes a ride on a bullet train.



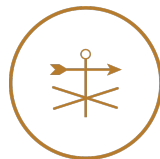
LODGING

Rejuvenate at traditional *ryokans* (inns) — many with *onsen* (hot springs) — set in scenic mountain locations.



CLIMATE

Late July to September is very hot (75°F to 95°F) and humid. The weather can be cooler in the mountains.



KNOW BEFORE YOU BOOK

Meals

Many of the inns visited will be smaller establishments so dining choices might be much simpler for gluten or fish allergies. Please let us know if you have any dietary restrictions. You should be comfortable with sitting down on the floor at meals.

Transportation

Most of the transfers will involve using public transportation and several different modes of public transport will be used on some days. In addition, we transfer luggage on several nights, where you will pack your essentials in a backpack and be without your main luggage for one or more nights.

Accommodation

Solo travelers booked into single rooms may be asked to share with a same-gender traveler in the ryokans. Ryokans and minshuku are traditional inns that may have tatami mat floors, futon beds, and shared bathing facilities.



Japan Sacred Northern Lakes & Mountains Hiking

Spiritual Traditions & Hot Springs from Tokyo to Nikko

In Japan, mountains are objects of worship where powerful spirits reside. This itinerary explores Northern Honshu's revered mountain destinations, dripping with legend and tradition, bookended with tours of modern Tokyo and historic Nikko. From Nikko National Park's UNESCO-listed temples to the volcanic Hakkoda Mountains and Dewa Sanzan—home to sacred mountains and Shugendo's holiest shrines—experience the connection with nature that infuses Japanese life and culture. Hike along sparkling lakes and mountain streams, and rejuvenate in a charming onsen. Explore northern Japan's beautiful, sacred spaces on this specially crafted adventure!

13 Days

Start: Tokyo, Japan

End: Tokyo, Japan

Departing: July, August, September

Activities: Cultural Discovery, Hiking & Trekking,

Global National Parks

Lodging: Comfortable Hotels

Group Size: 4-15 Guests

ACTIVITY:



Check [mtsobek.com](https://www.mtsobek.com) for date-specific pricing.

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"Great trip to a less explored part of Japan with a very knowledgeable guide. Couldn't do this trip without this kind of support."

- Jerry G.

The Itinerary

DAY
01

Arrive in Tokyo

Welcome to Japan! After arrival at the airport, transfer to your hotel, where you'll enjoy a festive welcome dinner and a well-deserved night's sleep.

MEALS: Dinner

DAY
02

Go Back in Time in Tokyo

After breakfast, head out for a full-day walking tour of Tokyo, beginning with Yanaka, an old quarter of the city that still retains charm from the Edo period, with its traditional wooden houses, narrow streets, and small temples. Continue on to Asakusa and Senso-ji, a large Buddhist temple with a five-story 7th-century pagoda that was rebuilt after World War II. Leading up to the main temple buildings is Nakamise-dori, a pedestrian street lined with craft and souvenir shops capped off by Kaminari-mon, the temple's famous entrance gate. Please see luggage FAQ for more details on this day.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

ACTIVITY: 6 hours/5-6 miles hiking

DAY
03

Journey to Historic Nikko

Travel to historic Nikko, a town set against a stunning backdrop of wooded hills and national parklands. The extravagantly ornate buildings of Nikko's Toshogu Shrine are now on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. The shrine was created in commemoration of Tokugawa Ieyasu, a shogun venerated for uniting feuding lords to create the nation of Japan, and the intricate temple carvings are full of whimsy — including cats and monkeys. Finish your tour with Rinno-ji, with its lacquered pillars and gohonzon shrines, and Futarasan Shrine, dedicated to the Nikko Mountains' spirits.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 2-hour train ride

DAY
04

Explore the Natural Beauty of Oku Nikko

This morning set out to explore Oku Nikko, the "hinterland of Nikko," an area of outstanding natural beauty in the mountainous north of Nikko and now a protected national park. Enjoy leisurely trekking in the Karikomi Lake area, famous for its natural sulfur hot springs. Monks have harnessed these waters for their healing properties since their discovery in 788 — and at your *ryokan*, in the Nikko Yumoto Onsen area, you can experience these waters for yourself! You'll also explore the surrounding marshlands and their wide array of bird life.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

ACTIVITY: 5–6 hours/8 miles hiking with 1,840' elevation gain & 1,870' elevation loss

DAY 05

See Yamadera's Temple & the Scenic Ginzan Onsen

Travel to Yamagata and hike to Yamadera, the "mountain temple" known as Risshaku-ji. This Tendai sect of Mahayana Buddhism temple is perched atop the mountainside with 1,000 steps leading to it. The upper temple houses a sacred flame that has been burning since the temple was founded in 860! A viewing platform situated slightly farther up the mountain offers impressive views of the neighboring peaks and the valley below. Descend and board the train to scenic Ginzan Onsen, a small hot springs town known for traditional wooden onsen lining the riverfront. Please see luggage FAQ for more details on this day.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 4-hour transfer by bus & train

ACTIVITY: 1 mile/2 hours hiking with 738' elevation gain & loss

DAY 06

Hike from Haguro-san

After breakfast and perhaps another quick soak in the hot spring, take a bus to the nearest railway station and catch the *shinkansen* (bullet train) north, following the Japan Sea's picturesque coastline to Dewa Sanzan—the three sacred peaks of Haguro-san, Gas-san, and Yudono-san. The lowest of these is Haguro-san (1,358'), the spiritual home of the Shugendo, which blends the native Shinto belief system with Buddhism and other forms of mountain worship. You'll visit the shrine at the summit of Haguro san, and descend the 2,446 steps to our accommodation for the evening.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 2-hour bullet train ride

ACTIVITY: 2,446 steps/1,375' downhill & 1-1.5 hours walking with 1,375' elevation loss

DAY 07

Discover Shrine Secrets in Dewa Sanzan

Transfer to the start of your hike on Mount Gas-san, where you will encounter some uneven terrain (hiking poles recommended). The highest of the three sacred mountains, Gas-san (or "Moon Mountain," 6,509') is covered in deep snow—up to nearly 20 feet—for much of the year. The mountain is officially opened each year with a ceremony at the summit's Shinto shrine. Here pilgrims in white coats head for the Dewa Sanzan shrine, with its massive thatched roof. Along your walk there are lovely small ponds formed by the melting snow and an abundance of alpine flowers.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

ACTIVITY: 4.5 hours/6 miles hiking with 2,000' elevation gain & loss



DAY 08

Travel to Sukayu Onsen

This morning your bag travels ahead of you to Yakeyama while you and your overnight bag journey to Sukayu Onsen, in the far northeast of Honshu. Sukayu Onsen is one of the snowiest inhabited regions on earth, but thankfully the thermals caused by the dormant volcano, with their warm waters, provide an enjoyable counterbalance to the cold of the snow. The *onsen* is famous for its milky mineral-rich waters of its *sen-in-buro*, or 1,000-person bath! The bath is mixed gender, and there are also two smaller gender-specific hot springs. Please see luggage FAQ for more details on this day.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 6-hour train and bus transfer

DAY 09

Hike on Mount Hakkoda

Mount Hakkoda forms part of a plateau of dormant volcanoes situated between Lake Towada and Aomori, and is known for its high-altitude wetlands. While the volcanoes of Mount Hakkoda are dormant, they do make themselves known in the area's *onsen*. Ascend to the highlands by cable car and hike the Kenashi Paradise line trail, descending to Sukayu. Travel by bus to tonight's accommodation, where your bag, sent from Haguro, will be waiting for you.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 1-hour bus transfer, 10-minute cable car ride

ACTIVITY: 3 hours/3-4 miles hiking with 364' elevation gain and 1,742' loss



DAY
10

Walk in Oirase

Your bag heads to Tokyo while you enjoy a half-day hike along the Oirase stream. This unspoiled area of Lake Towada is famous for its autumn foliage, but is spectacularly beautiful year-round. The stream follows the floor of the Oirase Gorge and is the only draining river from Lake Towada. During summer, waterfalls and fast-moving rapids punctuate the stream's lush greenery and virgin forests. The cedar, beech, and maple trees along its banks provide a beautiful canopy for your walk. The walk concludes with a scenic lake cruise to your accommodations. Please see luggage FAQ for more details on this day.

MEALS: Breakfast | Dinner

ACTIVITY: 4 hours/6 miles hiking & 330' elevation gain



DAY
11

Bullet Train Back to Tokyo

This morning, you will enjoy a short and easy walk to Towada shrine. You'll then have lunch before you travel by bus and then *shinkansen* to make your way back to Tokyo. There is time to pick up additional local delicacies to snack on as you relax on the train journey back to Tokyo. You'll arrive at the hotel in the early evening, where your bag sent from Yakeyama awaits. The rest of the day is free and you can explore Tokyo in the evening on your own.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch

TRANSPORTATION: 5-hour bus and train transfer



DAY
12

Explore Trails in Kamakura

Spend today walking in Kamakura, scenically located between the ocean and the wooded hills just southwest of Tokyo. Famous for its temples, some of which you discover today, it also provides great walking along the Ten'en trail, situated in the northern regions of Kamakura. Follow a ridgeline to Kencho-ji Temple, passing tomb caves and jizo statues as you walk through birch, maple, ginkgo, and bamboo groves. This afternoon, return to the hotel and relax. There is time to explore the neighborhood on your own before a festive farewell dinner with the group.

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

ACTIVITY: 3 hours/4 miles hiking with 708' elevation gain & 730' elevation loss



DAY
13

Depart from Tokyo

This morning, bid each other farewell and transfer to the airport for your flight home.

MEALS: Breakfast



Where You'll Stay

These accommodations may be subject to change depending on your date of travel.

Park Hotel

Park Hotel is a luxury hotel ideally located in Shiodome, a bustling center of Tokyo's business and culture. The hotel's art theme is reflected in the 17 artist-designed guest rooms, the various art installations and exhibitions the hotel displays, and the creative cuisine served in its many restaurants. The Park Hotel Tokyo offers traditional Japanese hospitality in a modern setting.

Itaya Ryokan

Itaya Ryokan is an *onsen* with both a 250-year-old traditional side and a modern side. The property is surrounded by beautiful mountains, and the natural, milky-white spring water in the communal baths contains sulfur, which is purported to have skin-smoothing and healing properties. Japanese-style guest rooms have futons on tatami-mat floors and en suite bathroom facilities.

Takimikan

This hidden *onsen*'s peaceful, open-air bath has stunning views of Ginzan Onsen area, and all rooms face the spectacular mountains. Indoor and outdoor communal hot spring baths are segregated by gender. Japanese-style rooms have futon bedding and en suite facilities, and the *ryokan*'s renowned restaurant serves fresh buckwheat noodles, seasonal local vegetables, and fish at night.



Where You'll Stay

These accommodations may be subject to change depending on your date of travel.

Sankoin

Staying in the beautiful Sankoin Shinto shrine lodging, originally part of a Buddhist temple, is a wonderful experience, and may include the opportunity to join the early morning religious service. Communal baths are segregated by gender, and toilets are not in-room. Rooms are Japanese style with futons on tatami-mat floors and divided by paper screens. The food is excellent vegetarian *shojin-ryori* cuisine.

Sukayu Onsen Ryokan

Sukayu Onsen is famous for its large, 1,000-person hot spring bath made of *hinoki* (cypress). Originally built by local people in the Edo period, over the next three centuries the *onsen* became larger and popular as a healing and restorative *onsen*. There is mixed-gender and gender-specific bathing here. Toilet facilities are shared, and rooms are Japanese style with futon bedding.

Yakeyamasou

The entirety of this hot springs *ryokan* building is made of natural *hinoki* and tatami mats. Its *onsen* baths use natural water coming directly from the hot spring source, and indoor and outdoor baths are available. Soaking here, with views of the mountains, is incredible! Rooms are Japanese style with en suite bathrooms, and there's Wi-Fi in the lobby.

Shinzantei

This *ryokan* is located on the shore of Lake Towada, a caldera lake created by an ancient volcanic eruption. All rooms are Japanese style with futon bedding on tatami-mat floors. Rooms also have en suite bathrooms. Guests may enjoy the *onsen*'s communal hot spring bath, which is available 24 hours a day.

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Departure Dates

This trip is available to run in: July, August, September

Book early for a greater choice of available dates.
Once you book, your price is GUARANTEED!

July 14-26, 2024

September 1-13, 2024

September 15-27, 2024

July 14-26, 2025

August 31-September 12, 2025

September 14-26, 2025

What's Included

PRICE INCLUDES

- Expertise and services of our experienced adventure guides
- All accommodations as noted in the itinerary
- All breakfasts, almost all lunches and dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Snacks and water between meals
- Additional regional guides and experts on many trips
- Comprehensive Trip Planner with detailed pre-trip information
- Private guided tours at historic sites, museums, wineries and other select attractions as noted in the itinerary
- Special events and other select attractions as mentioned in the itinerary
- All gratuities at hotels and restaurants
- Equipment and experienced guides for activities as described in the itinerary
- Park and other entry fees (unless otherwise noted)
- Fares for trains, ferries and other modes of travel as listed in the itinerary
- Select transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- Baggage transfers and portorage

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International airfare, airport taxes, and excess baggage fees
- Alcoholic beverages (MT Sobek provides wine at select events)
- Gratuities for MT Sobek guides and guide-drivers
- Travel Protection Program
- Personal expenses



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