Travel Smart Guide
A safe and responsible return to travel

JAPAN
As the world reopens its doors and our trips begin to operate again, the wellbeing of our travellers, our local teams, and the communities we visit, is of the upmost importance. We are committed to ensuring a safe and responsible return to travel. In all our destinations we have implemented new health and hygiene protocols, in accordance with local and national governmental legislation. In addition to this we consider recommendations from the ‘World Travel & Tourism Council’s (WTTC) Safe Travel Protocols For Tour Operators’.

Below you will find the steps we are taking to keep you safe and healthy on our holidays to Japan.

1. Health screening and reporting.
Guests will be met at the airport and transfer to their tour start hotel by train. A simple health questionnaire needs to be completed by each person and your temperatures taken with a no-touch thermometer.

Our welcome meeting will be held in the hotel. For larger tour groups (to assist with social distancing) two meetings will be offered with only half the group members attending at the one time. Welcome letters will be sprayed with sanitiser before being handed out.

2. Hand Sanitation
Personal hygiene including frequent hand washing and not touching your face is essential to minimizing the spread of the COVID-19 and other viruses.

Although sanitiser is available upon entry to every hotel and most establishments, travellers should bring along their own face masks and enough hand sanitiser for their personal use throughout their stay. Sanitiser is not available in vehicles, nor on public transport, so again we recommend you bring your own and sanitise frequently. Cash transactions are common in Japan and we recommend you sanitise after handling money. All guests are given a Suica swipe card which is used for paying for public transportation and can be used in many shops. The card can be topped up easily with more funds and is a good solution for reducing cash transactions.

3. Social distancing
Social distancing will be adhered to throughout your tour. The social distancing guideline is 2 metres, though there are some locations/situations where the guideline is less. Your guide will let you know in such cases.

Many hotels have also introduced screens to minimise direct personal contact at reception and restaurants are staggering seating times in addition to rearranging seating to allow for social distancing.

4. Air conditioning & Respiratory Precautions
The wearing of face masks is not mandatory in Japan, but the majority of people have opted to wear them. Establishments can deny entry to those not wearing a face mask, so it’s important that you carry one with you.

All AC systems form part of an annual maintenance plan and filters are cleaned and replaced as required. Where possible, doors and windows should be kept open to encourage air flow and increase air circulation.

5. Sanitation of transportation and luggage
Most drivers are wearing a face mask and some are wearing gloves. Wearing a face mask and/ or gloves is not a statutory requirement in Japan. We suggest that guests always carry their own luggage to limit contact. However, if you need the help of a staff member, they will do so using gloves and disinfecting their hands.
Guests should bring along enough gel/spray to sanitise their own luggage, if they feel this is required. Our best advice is at minimum you sanitise your luggage after it has been returned from the luggage forwarding service which occurs between 1 and 3 times on your trip.

6. Included meal arrangements
Included buffet meals have been replaced with set menus. Dinner time is staggered at our Lake Kawaguchi ryokan and restaurant seating has been re-arranged to allow for social distancing.

7. Crew
Our team has been trained on the new health and hygiene protocols. The government has set up a health helpline which our guide’s will call should any guest be showing symptoms or feeling unwell.

Our guides will be wearing face masks and sanitise their hands on a regular basis. For now, we will be greeting with a smile instead of a handshake.

8. Further instruction
The wearing of face masks is not compulsory in Japan, but most people are wearing them and some would consider it rude if you were not wearing a mask. Guides will ask clients to comply with mask wearing (where compulsory) and hygiene procedures.

9. Playing your part
We ask all travellers to please act responsibly and adhere to all guidelines. Please respect the 2m social distancing policy, sanitise regularly and wear a face mask in all public places.

It is essential that you check the latest entry requirements before you travel to Japan, as health requirements may change. Please travel to Japan only if you feel completely healthy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - TRAVELLING IN A COVID-19 WORLD

Will I be refunded if I am unwell before my trip and unable to travel?
If you are unwell prior to travelling, please contact us to make alternative arrangements as you will need to stay at home. If you do opt to travel under these circumstances, you will not be able to join the tour and will be referred for medical care in-country. Please refer to our Booking Conditions for more details on our cancellation policy.

Will I be covered by my travel insurance if I get COVID-19 while travelling?
We recommend that you check directly with your travel insurance provider for more details about the specific cover, as many insurance companies have amended their policies to better accommodate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 on my tour?
If you or someone else on your trip has symptoms of COVID-19 while travelling with us, we will assist in seeking medical care. We will follow the advice of local health authorities on whether a COVID-19 test is required, whether there is a need to self-isolate or quarantine or whether there is a risk to other travellers in the group.

Should COVID-19 be confirmed, full health and safety protocols will be followed, including informing local health authorities and the group of the potential exposure. Extensive sanitisation protocols such as deep cleaning and disinfecting accommodation and transport will then be undertaken. Please note that while we will assist to ensure that you get all the medical care you require, all expenses for testing, treatment or self-isolation will be at a personal cost.
If I test positive, will I get my money back?
If you are unable to continue travelling with us due to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 we can offer you a credit for the unused days of your tour. Further we will assist you to get all the medical care you require in-country though all expenses relating to your care including testing, treatment or self-isolation (in-country or at home) will be at a personal cost.

As a solo traveller, can I share a room with another solo traveller?
We are no longer offering to match up solo travellers in twin share rooms. All our tours now offer a Single room option. If you are travelling solo, you will be required to purchase a single room for your personal use.

Will my itinerary be changed due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions?
We may need to make some changes to the activities included on your trip to comply with advice from local authorities or updated health and safety protocols. We will endeavour to keep travellers updated before departure (or as soonest if you are already on tour) as our local teams continue to keep abreast of regional developments, including any closures or changes to sights and attractions. Although an open mind and sense of flexibility will help you get the most out of your trip, we will always aim to operate our tours exactly as per the original itinerary.