2017 Summer Kyoto Gion Festival with 2-Night Miyajima Experience

Experience One of the Oldest and Greatest Festivals in Japan!

9 Nights / 11 Days • Escorted from Honolulu • Includes English Speaking Local Guide
July 08 – 18, 2017 • Tour Managers: Dale & Lia Thomas
18 Meals (9 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches & 4 Dinners)

OVERVIEW:
Kyoto Gion Matsuri (festival) is one of the oldest festivals in Japan and one of the greatest. Traditional rituals and events related to this amazing festival are held throughout the month of July in Kyoto. Experience the Gion Festival and taste the wonders of Kyoto’s history, craft and music traditions. The Gion Festival is considered one of Japan’s top three festivals to feature floats. The others being Takayama Festival and the Chichibu Night Festival.

VISIT:
Himeji • Kurashiki • Okayama • Hiroshima • Miyajima (2 Night Stay)
Kyoto • Kameoka • Arashiyama • Nara

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS:
Himeji Castle • Kurashiki • AEON Mall • Peace Memorial Park • A-Bomb Museum
A-Bomb Dome • Children’s Memorial • Itsukushima Shrine • Miyajima Ropeway
Golden Pavilion • Heian Jingu Shrine • Nijo Castle • Kiyomizu Temple
Hozu River Downstream Cruise • Torokko Train • Arashiyama Bamboo Forest
Gion Festival • Fushimi Inari Shrine • Todaiji Temple • Nara Deer Park

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES:
Yuzen Table Mat Dyeing • Japanese Tea Ceremony

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES:
Himeji Castle • A-Bomb Dome • Itsukushima Shrine • Golden Pavilion
Nijo Castle • Kiyomizu Temple • Todaiji Temple

* Fares are per person, USD based on double occupancy and INCLUDE ALL AIRLINE TAXES AND FEES. Airline fuel supplements, taxes and fees are subject to change and tour member is responsible for any increases. Your fare is subject to change due to fluctuation of the rate of exchange between U.S. and foreign currency. In the event of revaluation, the land portion of the tour may be adjusted prior to final payment. Some airline-imposed personal charges, including but not limited to baggage, priority boarding and special seating, may apply. For details visit www.exploreflightfees.com. After initial deposit, a $15 per person Non-Stop Travel (NST) Cancellation Fee will apply. Group departures may be cancelled, if there are less than 24 tour members. Final Payment to NST for Air & Land package must be made by Money Order or Personal Check. NST does not guarantee that all tour members will fly together with Tour Manager. Tour Manager assignments and “final” tour itinerary are subject to change. NST reserves the right to correct errors or omissions including but not limited to, fares, fees and surcharges at any time. Deposit: $500 per person. Final Payment Due: 03/04/17.
† Early Booking Discount is per person. Purchase of Non-Stop Travel’s complete Air & Land package is required.
** Earn Rewards Every Time You Refer a Friend. For each “New-to-NonStop Travel” customer you refer, both you and your referral can receive a $25 discount off your next Non-Stop Travel escorted group. 092716
2017 SUMMER KYOTO GION FESTIVAL DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

Day 1: Sat, July 08 – HONOLULU – Depart Honolulu.

Day 2: Sun, July 09 – OSAKA. Arrive Kansai International Airport. After entry formalities, walk to your hotel which is a short covered walk from the airport. A deluxe buffet dinner has been arranged at the hotel. HOTEL NIKKO KANSAI AIRPORT HOTEL (1 Night) (D)

Day 3: Mon, July 10 – OSAKA – HIMEJI – KURASHIKI – OKAYAMA. After a sumptuous buffet breakfast we drive to Himeji to visit Himeji Castle. It is known as “White Egret Castle” and “White Heron Castle” because of its brilliant white exterior, resembling a bird taking flight. It is the largest and most visited castle in Japan. It is a splendid example of traditional architecture. Next is a visit to Kurashiki. In merchant days, this scenic town thrived as a port for rice shipments. Several old rice granaries and examples of historic architecture still remain, in addition to the stone lined canal. Transfer to Okayama where you will enjoy shopping and dining at one of the largest AEON Shopping Malls. HOTEL GRANVIA OKAYAMA (1 Night) (B, L)

Day 4: Tue, July 11 – OKAYAMA – HIROSHIMA – MIYAJIMA. In Hiroshima visit the Peace Memorial Park, A-Bomb Museum, A-Bomb Dome and Children’s Memorial. After a special breakfast arrive on the island of Miyajima, considered sacred by many. This evening soak in the relaxing atmosphere of Iwaso Inn and the onsen hot spring baths. You can enjoy the beauty of the primeval forests and gentle sound of mountain streams while taking a bath. This evening enjoy a Traditional, Multi-Course Kaiseki Dinner featuring Hiroshima’s local and seasonal ingredients including Course Kaiseki Dinner (Iwaso Inn) (2 Nights) Japanese-Style Room with Onsen and Kaiseki Dinner. (B, L, D)

Day 5: Wed, July 12 – MIYAJIMA. After a special breakfast this morning, start the day with a visit to the Itsukushima Shrine. At high tide, the vermilion torii gate of Itsukushima Shrine looks like it’s floating in the middle of the sea. Next we make our way to the Miyajima Ropeway. Miyajima Ropeway is the cable car and gondola system linking Miyajima township to Mount Misen. On a clear day the ropeway provides an excellent observation point, plus access to the Wild Monkey Park, temples and shrines. This afternoon enjoy excellent shopping and numerous choices for lunch (on your own) down the main street of Miyajima Island. This evening enjoy a different variety of Kaiseki Dinner. Be sure to enjoy the onsen hot spring baths before and after your dinner. (B, D)

Day 6: Thur, July 13 – MIYAJIMA – HIROSHIMA – KYOTO. After breakfast, we make our way back to Hiroshima via a short ferry ride. We then take a ride on the top speed Shinkansen bullet train back to Kyoto. Evening at leisure to explore on your own. Numerous choices for dining and shopping. NEW MIYAKO HOTEL (5 Nights) (B)

Day 7: Fri, July 14 – KYOTO. After a delicious Japanese/Western buffet breakfast at the hotel, embark on a full day of sightseeing beginning with a visit to the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), a Zen Temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Next visit Heian Jingu Shrine. The shrine was built on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the capital’s foundation in Kyoto and is dedicated to the spirits of the first and last emperors who reigned from the city, Emperor Kammu (737–806) and Emperor Komei (1831–1867). Heian is the former name of Kyoto. A giant torii gate marks the approach to the shrine. Then we visit Nijo Castle. After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace for a while before being donated to the city and opened up to the public as a historic site. Its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan’s feudal era. Today’s hands-on experience is “Surikomi Yuzen (brush dyed Yuzen)”. Since the patterns are dyed by placing a paper stencil over a table mat you can make an authentic piece, even if this is your first time. Lastly, we visit Kiyomizu Temple (literally “Pure Water Temple”). (B, L)

Day 8: Sat, July 15 – KYOTO – KAMEOKA – ARASHIYAMA – KYOTO. After breakfast, board your waiting coach and travel to Kameoka. Enjoy a float downstream on the Hozu River. Ride in an old fashioned wooden boat down the Hozu River to Arashiyama. The boats are manually rowed by experienced boatmen, who will tell you about local history as you travel down river, seeing beautiful natural scenery and wildlife along the way! Enjoy a very special lunch, a local Arashiyama specialty — Yudofu (boiled tofu) with Tempura and Sashimi. You will also have the opportunity to relax in the “gender-segregated” open-air Hot Springs/Onsen Bath with 100% natural hot spring water, the only one in Arashiyama with a great view of Togetsukyo Bridge, the Oi River, and Mount Atago. Explore the famous Arashiyama Bamboo Forests. Time will be allotted to explore and shop for world-famous Arashiyama bamboo products. Take a train ride on the Sagano Torokko Ressha (Sagano Romantic Train) before returning to Kyoto. (B, L, D)

Day 9: Sun, July 16 – KYOTO. Full Day at Leisure. (B)

Day 10: Mon, July 17 – KYOTO. This morning we will visit the Gion Festival by train. (Streets are closed to vehicular traffic). We have secured reserved seats to maximize your enjoyment. The Gion Summer Festival is held at Yasaka-jinja Shrine and the highlight is the splendid pageant of some 30 floats called “yamaboko” proceeding along the main streets of Kyoto. Each float, two-storied and about 6 meters tall, is topped with a long pole shaped like a spear. Adorned with exquisite craftsmanship such as woven fabric, dyed textiles and sculptures, these floats are so gorgeous that they are often described as “mobile art museums”. During the parade, children wearing make-up and musicians playing the flute, drums, and bells are seated on the second level of the floats. This festival is believed to have started some 1,100 years ago when floats were made and paraded in the town to appease the deity of plague and illness. You will be joining thousands of people in the merriment by watching the performances and dancers, eating matsuri (festival) food, and listening to great taiko drums. (B)

Day 11: Tue, July 18 – KYOTO – NARA – OSAKA. After breakfast, check out from hotel. A full day of sightseeing is ahead. On our way to Osaka visit the stunning vermilion colored Fushimi Inari Shrine, whose 4km long tunnel of scarlet torii gates was featured on the film Memoirs of a Geisha. Experience a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony. Then visit the Todaji Temple in Nara. Today, the largest wooden building in Japan, houses the largest bronze statue of Buddha at 16.3 meters high. The surrounding Nara Park is inhabited by over 1,000 deer. We now make way to Kansai International Airport for our flight home. Depart Osaka. Arrive Honolulu the same day. Aloha and Welcome Home! (B, L)