



The way of the samurai, known as bushido, has fascinated westerners for hundreds of years. In this very special tour, we travel through Japan focusing on the era of the samurai, with introductions to the castles, battlefields, customs and mystique of the samurai. Visits to a range of original, reconstructed and castle ruins offer a glimpse into the lifestyle of the ruling class of the samurai. Attending a battle re-enactment of the battle of Nagashino serves as a template for discussions of the important battles that delineated the epoch periods of Japanese history. Introductions into the ancient craft of swordmaking, along with special sessions with sword masters allow you to come to a greater understanding of the importance of the sword in Japanese culture. This is an upscale tour of one of Japan's major historical threads, the way of the samurai that is woven into the very fabric of Japanese culture.

- Visits to Castles and Castle Sites: Kanazawa, Nagoya, Hikone, Nijo, and Himeji
- Kanazawa samurai houses and introduction to a renowned tsuba collector
- Nagashino Festival, commemorating the Battle of Nagashino
- Battlefield visit to the site of the Battle of Sekigahara
- Private visits with experts on all areas of Japanese swordcraft.
- A stay at a deluxe Japanese ryokan with a full kaiseki meal
- A private dinner in a converted samurai house accompanied by a special performance of shakuhachi music

*Long conversations
beside blooming irises
Joys of life on the road
— Basho*

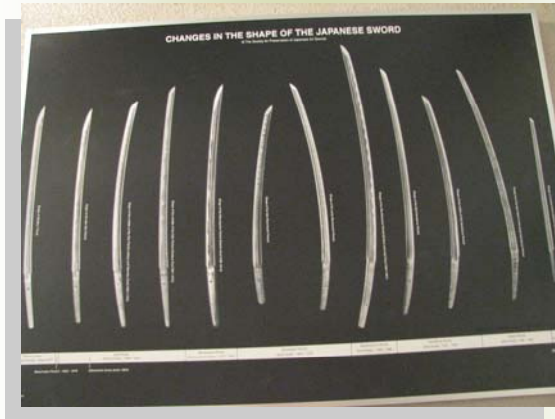
In the Shadow of the Samurai

Day 1 – Friday Apr 30: **Depart U.S. for Japan** by individually arranged flights.

Day 2 – Saturday May 1: **Tokyo**

Your flight arrives at Narita International Airport, where you will transfer by airport Limousine Bus to Tokyo and to your hotel. You will have the evening free to relax, unpack and rest up for tomorrow.

Accommodations: Royal Park Shiodome



Day 3 – Sunday May 2: **Tokyo**

Spend the day with our British National Museum expert on Japanese Swords. He will lead us through a thorough introduction into the centuries-old world of the katana, and all that is involved in the production and maintenance of the blades used by samurai. Following an overview at the Tokyo Museum collection, we'll have a special visit with one of the many artisans that it takes to craft these amazing pieces. Tonight we'll have a welcome dinner and sake tasting.

Accommodations: Royal Park Shiodome (B, D)

Day 4 – Monday May 3: **Tokyo**

Today begins with more time for our in-depth introduction into the katana. We begin our day with a visit to Sengakuji,

burial site of Lord Asano and the 47 Ronin who defended his honor after he was forced to commit seppuku, commemorated in the classic tale *Chushingura*. Sengakuji is still a popular spot in Tokyo and a place for modern admirers of what many feel were the finest examples of samurai loyalty to emerge from the Edo Period. We'll then head to the Tokyo Sword museum for a private tour of their collection and then have optional time at the Japan Sword store with our expert. Afterwards, have some free time on your own in Tokyo.

Accommodations: Royal Park Shiodome (B)

Day 5 – Tuesday May 4: **Tokyo to Nagoya**

We'll depart Tokyo via train to Nagoya for an in-depth tour of Nagoya castle (reconstructed in 1959 and now a museum of feudal history), where Tokugawa's son Yoshinao ruled over the Owari area. This castle is most famous for its two golden *shachihoko* on the top of the donjon.

Accommodations: Nagoya Marriott (B)

Day 6 – Wednesday May 5:

Nagashino

Today we venture out from Nagoya to participate in and enjoy the annual Nagashino festival, commemorating the Kassen (decisive battle) of Nagashino, which ushered in the Sengoku period. The protagonists in this epoch-making encounter during the Warring States Period were the 38,000 soldiers of an alliance between two of the unifying fathers of modern Japan, Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu, against a force of some 15,000 troops under the command of Takeda Katsuyori. The battle is known for the effective first use of guns in Japan and delivered a crushing blow to Takeda's cavalry. *Nobori* (16th-century-style battle banners) mark the way to the vibrant arena where the festival takes place. There are gunnery demonstrations, a procession



PAUL THOMPSON PHOTOS

In the Shadow of the Samurai

April 30—May 12, 2010

of festival participants in period costume, demonstrations of swordsmanship, taiko-drumming, harquebus and matchlock rifle firing. Afterwards, we'll retire to a nearby inn for dinner.

Accommodations: Nagoya Marriott (B, D)

Day 7 – Thursday May 6: Nagoya to Kaga Onsen

Our bus today will take us to Kaga Onsen via a stop at Sekigahara. The battle of Sekigahara marked the end of the Sengoku period and saw the forces of Ishida Mitsunari square off against Tokugawa Ieyasu. A visit to the battlefield site will allow you to walk through the campsites, battle sites and areas where each stage of the encounter took place.

Tonight, we will be staying at a typical Japanese ryokan, where we will experience Japanese style rooms with tatami mats and sleeping on futons on the floor, Japanese *onsen* (hot spring) baths and a special multi-course *Kaiseki* dinner while robed in the *yukata* provided by the inn. We'll arrive early so you can take full advantage of the experience and

have an opportunity to explore the walking trail following the perimeter of the nearby Kakusen Gorge.

Accommodations: Kayoutei Ryokan (B, D)



Day 8 – Friday May 7: Kaga Onsen to Kanazawa

From 1583 to the end of the Edo Period, Kanazawa Castle was the seat of the powerful Maeda Clan, lords of Kaga, a feudal domain ranking second only to the Tokugawa possessions in terms of size and rice production. Today we take a short train ride to Kanazawa where we will visit Kanazawa castle, go to Myoryuji (Ninja Temple) with its trap doors and hidden passages, and then take a walk through the historic samurai district. We end our touring day with a visit to the owner of a ryokan which houses an amazing collection of *tsuba* from all periods of Japanese sword making. After this introduction you can dine on your own before retiring to our western-style hotel for the night

Accommodations: Excel Tokyu Hotel (B)

Day 9 – Saturday May 8: Kanazawa to Kyoto

Today we train to Kyoto with a stop en route to explore Hikone Castle. Rule of the surrounding area was given to Ii Naomasa after the Battle of Sekigahara and the new castle was completed in 1615 by Naomasa's son, Naotaka. Upon arrival in Kyoto we'll check into our hotel and explore the immediate area

Accommodations: Hyatt Regency Hotel (B)

Day 10 – Sunday May 9: Kyoto

Today we'll thoroughly explore Nijo Castle, best known for its "nightingale floors", designed to warn those inside of the approach of threats or friends. You may make a stop at the Japanese sword store across from the Castle while taking your lunch. Then it's on to a special visit to a master of one of the samurai arts who will educate us on both the art and spirit of the samurai. We'll end the day with dinner in a converted samurai house, accompanied by a private *shakuhachi* flute performance.

Accommodations: Hyatt Regency Hotel (B, D)



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Esprit
TRAVEL & TOURS

Phone: 800-377-7481

E-mail: info@esprittravel.com

CST# 1020919-40 NVST# 240000058

Day 11 – Monday May 10: **Kyoto**

This morning we will head to Daitoku-ji for a private tea ceremony. Tea was a central form of relaxation, concentration and peace-making for the samurai, and Daitoku-ji was an important place for its practice. The rest of the afternoon is on your own to explore Kyoto with advice from our tour leader.

Accommodations: Hyatt Regency Hotel (B, D)



Day 12 – Tuesday May 11: **Himeji and Takeda**

Today we head out of Kyoto by train to explore Himeji, considered the most spectacular example of a Japanese castle in existence. Himeji-jo is the only castle in Japan where you can really get a feeling for what castles were like in the Sengoku period. (Please note that Himeji will be under renovation during 2010.) Toyotomi Hideyoshi first built a small donjon on this site for his campaigns in western Japan from 1577-1580. You can still see some of the remnants of Hideyoshi's castle in Himeji castle as Ikeda incorporated some of the stone walls into his castle. Ikeda Terumasa, an ally of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara, was awarded this province (Harima) for his alliance during the war. Ikeda Terumasa built the donjon of Himeji-jo and erected the castle as it is known today. Himeji-jo's nickname Shirasagi-jo means "White Heron Castle" because the main donjon with its three smaller donjon resembles a white heron. After a thorough exploration of Himeji,



you can choose to head on to Takeda, for a visit to the castle ruins of Takeda Castle, which was built by Ohtagaki Mitsukage, a retainer of Yamana Sozen, lord of the area, in 1441. We'll head back to Kyoto for a farewell dinner.

Accommodations: Hyatt Regency Kyoto Hotel (B, D)

Day 13 – Tuesday May 12: **Depart for U.S.**

Transfers from Kyoto to Osaka Kansai Airport will be arranged to coincide with your flight departures.

Meals: (B)

Tour Pricing: Approximately \$6250 for a group of 12 participants. There will may be a small group surcharge for a group smaller than 8.

Tour Price Includes:

Airport transfers
Baggage shipping for one suitcase per person
A full program of informative commentary by an Esprit tour leader fluent in the native language
Daily touring, including admissions and transportation
Accommodations for 11 nights (based on twin occupancy)
Daily breakfast and additional meals as indicated, including a mix of lunches and dinners

To register please call Esprit at 800-377-7481.

You may wish to extend your tour in Japan. We will provide reservations at the group hotel in Kyoto and sightseeing itineraries of Kyoto and Tokyo at no extra charge. For those wishing additional services from us, including hotel reservations, local guides, custom itineraries and transportation arrangements, please discuss possibilities and fees with our custom travel department.

Note:

Each tour is designed to allow us to include as many special events, personal visits with artisans, seasonal festivals, and performances as possible. Actual visits and events will be finalized approximately 30 days prior to departure to allow for the inclusion of special exhibitions, visits and events, and are dependent on the schedules of our Japanese colleagues. A final itinerary will be sent to you about two weeks prior to tour departure.

Castle information from www.jcastle.info.