

Global Travel Planning Podcast Episode 13 - Japan Itinerary

(Note this is an AI-generated transcript)

Tracy Collins [00:00:05]:

Hi, and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I'm your host, Tracey Collins, who, with my expert guests, will take you on a weekly journey to destinations around the globe, providing Travel inspiration, itinerary ideas, practical tips, and more to help you plan your next travel adventure. Hi, and welcome to episode 13 of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. This week, I'm actually sitting in India to record the episode, and Doug is in Australia, aren't you? I am. Hello. So, yeah, it's kinda spread around the world. And, actually, what we're gonna be talking about is and sharing is our 3 week Japan itinerary, which we did in October to November 2023, and we thought it would be full episodes to talk through. We are gonna be writing this up, as a full article.

Tracy Collins [00:00:56]:

So for more detail, I would recommend going on to the website, and having a look at the 21 days that we've done. But to give you a brief overview before Doug and I start kinda going through the itinerary in a little bit more detail. We were in Japan for 21 days, and we flew from Brisbane into Haneda Airport in Tokyo. We spent 6 days in Tokyo, then that was followed by 2 days in Nagano, Yudanaka. We then went to Takayama for a day, 2 days in Kanazawa before heading to Kyoto. Now we did base ourselves in Kyoto for a number of days. We were there for about 6 days, but we did also do a day trip to Nara from Kyoto. And then day 17, we're headed To Hiroshima, and we're there for a couple of days.

Tracy Collins [00:01:43]:

Again, we did a day trip from Hiroshima to Murajima Island. Then day 19, we headed to Osaka where we spent 2 days in Osaka and then flew out on day 21. That just about covers it, doesn't it, Doug?

Doug Collins [00:01:58]:

That pretty much summarized it nicely. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:02:01]:

Yeah. So we found this was a really good itinerary. It meant that we did hit Some of the main destinations that everybody wants to go to when they go to Japan, like Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, for example. But we all we're also able to include some of the kinda more unusual places potentially that people may not think about on their 1st visit to Japan.

Doug Collins [00:02:23]:

I know I know you did a lot of research before we went to look at the places we're gonna go and visit, didn't you?

Tracy Collins [00:02:29]:

I did. Yeah. I wanted to get it right because we knew we're gonna spend 3 weeks And I wanted to make sure that we had as much information. And I am gonna give a big shout out actually to my friend, Helen, who runs the Japanese website and Facebook group. I will link to that. Helen is actually gonna be on the podcast to talk about planning a trip to Japan in a

few months' time, and she was very, very helpful. So, you know, as well as having an, obviously, look at our itinerary and we're gonna do another Kaston sharing some of our tips as first time visitors. I would highly recommend that you join that Facebook group and go and have a look at Helen's website.

Doug Collins [00:03:04]:

Idea. Because we're both our visitors to Japan, weren't we? We're very excited about going.

Tracy Collins [00:03:09]:

We were, but also nervous because, obviously, there's lots of things to think about when you go into a country where you not only do not understand the language, but it's not even written in a way that you can potentially, you can recognize the symbol. So we did feel that we needed to do a lot of a little bit more research than probably we would do on other places. So we flew from Brisbane Airport into Tokyo Haneda Airport.

Doug Collins [00:03:30]:

We did. And we've done the, the immigration paperwork before we left Australia, but I did not print it out. And this presented a little bit of a headache when we arrived, we needed the QR code, but we overcame that. Just had to fill out paperwork again when we got there.

Tracy Collins [00:03:46]:

Yeah. Yeah. That was it. So it took us a little bit longer to get through immigration, so that's a good tip, actually, and we are gonna share in the next podcast some tips like that. So it meant that by the time we got through, I think all of it was the only suitcases that weren't even on the belt going around anymore. What I would recommend that you do, and this is what I do wherever go in the world, is we already had a prebook transfer, so we didn't have to worry. I spoke to the driver via WhatsApp as soon as we landed. He knew that we were slightly delayed, and it took us about 35 minutes to get to accommodation in Shinjuku, again, choosing when to stay in Tokyo.

Tracy Collins [00:04:21]:

There's always lots of conversations about, you know, where to stay. We chose this here in Shinjuku, which worked really well for us.

Doug Collins [00:04:29]:

It was. It was nice and central and, you know, easily located everywhere we wanted to go.

Tracy Collins [00:04:34]:

By the time we arrived, it was kinda later on in the evening, so that was as much as we did. So day 1 is the day we actually started doing bits and pieces. We had bought Japan rail passes. So we just walked down to Shinjuku railway station to exchange the vouchers that we had for the Japan rail pass and, sort out the activation 7 days later, and we also booked some of the seats on some of the Shinkansens that we knew that we were gonna be taking. Was actually really, really easy. Staff were really helpful, so it was not a painful process at all. So that day, we decided that we were gonna go to the Meiji Jinju Shinto shrine. So that was our first destination.

Tracy Collins [00:05:14]:

We did that by the bus, didn't we?

Doug Collins [00:05:16]:

We did. And that was easy as well because we want to familiarize ourselves with the the general area where we're staying as well. So that was a perfect introduction, we thought.

Tracy Collins [00:05:25]:

Yes. And we bought CICA cards, which is kind of a tap on, tap off card you can use for transportation and also in convenience stores. It's excellent. Because trying to get a physical card is quite difficult, we just actually loaded them on our phones, which was really easy, very easy to tap on and off, it's very easy to upload with additional credit once we're needing it. It was our 1st visit to a combini or Japanese convenience store to buy a selection of goods for our picnic. And honestly, I was like a kid in a candy store in there.

Doug Collins [00:05:56]:

It was some Different flavors and just things to try. Yeah. Well, we set ourselves up for a lovely picnic, didn't we, on the lawn.

Tracy Collins [00:06:03]:

Weather was really nice as well. So day 2, we decided to go to the Sensoji Buddhist Temple, which was founded in the 7th century, and it's Tokyo's oldest temple And it's famous for its giant red lantern. So to get there, we had to go to Saksa train station. And it's about 5 minute walk from there. It's a very, very Temple, and it was really, really, really busy, wasn't it? We went through the market as well.

Doug Collins [00:06:26]:

You know when you get there, because there's the giant Red lantern. So you know you're there.

Tracy Collins [00:06:30]:

Yeah. Well, that's true. That's true. But it it was incredibly busy. So, again, it it kinda it was one of those Tips, I guess, we'll share in the next one is about being at places early or considering where you're going. Because you don't visit on a Saturday would be my advice. We I think was it a Saturday we went on? Oh, yeah. It was a Saturday, so it was very busy.

Tracy Collins [00:06:48]:

So on day 2, basically, we planned the day the night before to get the best circuit for us Because we didn't wanna make any unnecessary trade train journeys and lose time, so we marked our preferred locations on a map, looked at the opening times, and then planned the true train route. Basically, we went to the He Shrine, Sensoji Temple, Shibuya Crossing, which was amazing, and then we ended the day with Takeshita So it was quite a full day.

Doug Collins [00:07:12]:

It it was. But because we had done the planning the night before, it was very efficient the way that we actually planned it out.

Tracy Collins [00:07:19]:

So then day 3, we actually booked a tour because we obviously want to go to Mount Fuji now. Like everybody, we would really had our fingers crossed that it was gonna be a clear day, because obviously quite often you can go out at Fuji and not actually see it. But this was one of the highlights of our trip. I absolutely loved this this day trip.

Doug Collins [00:07:36]:

Yeah. I I did too. We were really lucky the weather, weren't we? And, yes, it'd be clear.

Tracy Collins [00:07:40]:

So with that, obviously, we we met at the meeting point in the morning and then included all the transportation and the and the guide. We went to Lake Taguchi. I went to a Japanese village, and it was a really, really full day. I will put a link To the to the tour in the show notes. It was a get your guide tour. The honestly, our guide was amazing. We got some fabulous photos. The clouds kinda cleared Later on, so we got clay clear views of Mount Fuji.

Tracy Collins [00:08:05]:

The only thing I suppose that day which which was difficult is that it was a Sunday and the traffic back into Tokyo was crazy, so it actually took us 4 hours on the coach to get back.

Doug Collins [00:08:15]:

Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:08:17]:

Yeah. So it's a long day, but we did enjoy that. And then the The next day, we went to team lab, which is something I had booked quite a lot in advance because that did get booked up. And we loved that, didn't we?

Doug Collins [00:08:28]:

Oh, it was. Yeah. It was wonderful. Absolutely. It's just so so different.

Tracy Collins [00:08:32]:

So yeah. So that basically took up that day. And then day 5, we went to the Skytree and the imperial Imperial Palace and Gardens for a look around.

Doug Collins [00:08:40]:

Yeah. That's right. We had a great view. Again, the weather was clear. So from the, in the sky too, we had a good views The surrounding areas.

Tracy Collins [00:08:48]:

And then day 6 was our last day in Tokyo. We did go to Hana Biyori Gardens, but I think Probably wouldn't do that again. It was alright, but I wouldn't have gone on my way to do that. What we did do that day was we sent our 2 suitcases on To Kyoto because we didn't wanna be traveling on the trains because we knew we had the next part of the trip, which was gonna be going to see the snow monkeys, Takayama and Kanazawa, we didn't wanna be taking our suitcases. So on that day, our luggage was sent to Kyoto. It was gonna be stored and then sent to Kyoto. We did that. So that was our main kind of aim that day was to get ourselves sorted, wasn't it?

Doug Collins [00:09:23]:

Yep. That's right. And then in the evening, that same day, we had a walk around Shindoku station with all the lights and neon lights. It was it was really nice, wasn't it?

Tracy Collins [00:09:33]:

It was. Yes. And had some quite nice food. So then day 7, we took the Shinkansen, the deck to Nagano.

Doug Collins [00:09:39]:

That's right. The Shinkansen or that they're known as the bullet train, and anybody who knows me and my Trains, alpha, black little boy. It was just unbelievable. Every everything I've ever read or looked at about the bullet trains came to fruition. It was just absolutely incredible, and I loved it, didn't I? I was so excited.

Tracy Collins [00:09:58]:

Yeah. You did. You did. So, basically, what we were going to Nagano and then going to Ununeka To go to Woosden and Aria can. So with with its own private onsen as well, which was amazing, and we will actually be reviewing that reacam because we loved it. The people who ran it were quite elderly, but they were amazing. They were so friendly. We had a traditional Japanese evening meal and breakfast.

Tracy Collins [00:10:20]:

So, Again, something totally different. Hope definitely worth paying for. It was lovely, wasn't it? It was a really good experience.

Doug Collins [00:10:28]:

It was just such a contrast to anything we've done before or experienced before. So it was just a real eye, and it's actually quite a humbling eye also to actually be there in somebody's home and be experiencing this.

Tracy Collins [00:10:41]:

And there were there were there were other Japanese people staying there. There were some French people stay in there. So it was it was really good to do. And then the next day, because our plan was to see the snow monkeys now in the autumn, you can struggle sometimes to see them because they actually don't come down to their little onsens, their little their baths. But actually, the lady at the recon actually checked, and they said the monkeys were there. So as part of what they do the RioCan is included in the prices that they take and drop you off at the snow monkeys. And we actually met 2 Japanese ladies who were also staying at the RioCan, and we walked up with them, didn't we?

Doug Collins [00:11:15]:

We did. And a lot lovely ladies as well. Again, just sharing in the experience with people not being there before.

Tracy Collins [00:11:22]:

Yeah. It was great. We've got we've got some fantastic photos and videos, didn't we, of the snow monkeys? I loved it. I'd read a few negative comments about it online. And to be

honest, I loved it. I'd go again. I thought it was fantastic. The monkeys were really laid back, weren't they? Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:11:35]:

I was quite they're very chilled out, and and you're not the The biggest fan of monkeys generally, but you were fine.

Tracy Collins [00:11:41]:

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely fine. And then the next day, we went to Takayama where we spent 1 night, I had a look around the town before the next day on day 10, we took the train from Takeyama to Kanazawa. We've spent 2 nights there so we could get a little bit of washing done. What always amazes me in Japan as well, how fantastic the shopping centers are, the railway stations. So if you're actually looking for somewhere to eat, that's a great place to head. In Canada, there are fantastic options, isn't it?

Doug Collins [00:12:09]:

You do. You don't need to leave the train station, and the the the apartment we had was 5 minutes from the station as well. So it ticked every box for us, didn't it?

Tracy Collins [00:12:18]:

Yeah. It was lovely. I will put a link to the different places that we stayed as well in the show notes for this episode. We did the hop on, hop off bus. We went to Kanazawa Castle. We went to the Higashi area. So this is all the sort of things that we did in Kanazawa. And I think I think 2 days was was good.

Tracy Collins [00:12:33]:

We've got to see a fair amount. I probably would spend maybe a little bit longer. There were other places I wanted to visit in that area, but it was enough to give us an introduction, really, before we headed to Kyoto.

Doug Collins [00:12:45]:

Yeah. We also saw the, Jimmy Cho Market as well. I I like marketing in different countries and diff you know, different foods and different, you know, different things for sale in all markets.

Tracy Collins [00:12:56]:

So day 12, we took Train to Kyoto. I had actually organized to go to to the team lab, which I guess I'd kinda Not realized it was actually gonna be in Osaka. I hadn't read it properly, so we actually arrived in Kyoto and had to head straight to Osaka, didn't we? Which we're a bit tired, and it took us a lot longer than we thought walk to actually the team lab. While I enjoyed it, it wasn't our favorite team lab. Definitely the Tokyo one was a highlight for us, I think.

Doug Collins [00:13:21]:

It was. Yeah. The the morning itself was outside. It's mechanical.

Tracy Collins [00:13:25]:

Yeah. So then we spent a number of days in Kyoto, and there's Certainly, lots and lots of things to say in Kyoto. What I will say, though, is that it is spread out. So you really have to plan Your day is so you're not spending your entire time jumping on transport to get here, there, and everywhere. And we will do an entire episode about Kyoto and the places That we visited. In terms of getting around where we stayed, it was pretty good. We're not too far from the train station and we could jump on the bus. So we're quite close, obviously, lots of convenience stores.

Tracy Collins [00:13:54]:

So it worked pretty well and it been able to get around to the places, but it's just that things are spread out on there.

Doug Collins [00:14:01]:

That's right. And we we did have to plan it. And some of the buses have tried to travel as well a bit off peak time as well, but some of the buses got very full.

Tracy Collins [00:14:10]:

Yeah. They did. And I think we we also took from Kyoto because it was easier. We did a day trip to Nara to go and see the deer, which was, I thoroughly enjoyed that day. That was a really, really good trip, wasn't it?

Doug Collins [00:14:23]:

It was. And we had more stuff planned for the day, but Turns out that that was a public holiday. So, there was a lot more events actually in our park.

Tracy Collins [00:14:31]:

Yeah. It was busy. It was really, really busy, But it was actually really an enjoyable day trip out. And then from Kyoto, what we did as well is that we'd sent our Luggage on to Osaka, didn't we? So we didn't have to take it to Hiroshima.

Doug Collins [00:14:46]:

That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Which the 1st time you send your suitcases, we give you a few few Palpitations. This is the 2nd time we've done it, and we're very relaxed by this time, weren't we? By the stage that, You know, this is gonna arrive, but it's so much easier. It's really so much easier traveling on the train without them.

Tracy Collins [00:15:04]:

And we did have the AirTags in it so it could track where the luggage was, so that did help. We did have a little bit of a an issue with it though in that we couldn't send it from the hotel we're at. They they wouldn't Do the pickup for the luggage show, we had to go and find convenience store. They wanted everything written out in Japanese. Luckily, we had Managed to get that done, but I think we were a little bit worried about that time about making sure we could actually send it. But eventually, we got it sorted.

Doug Collins [00:15:30]:

Yes. That's right. Well, look, the convenience store we went in, the, person there was very knowledgeable and knew exactly how the setup was, how the system worked, I'd answer all our questions.

Tracy Collins [00:15:42]:

So some of the places that we did visit in Kyoto was the Golden Temple, Kinkakujou. I'm sure I haven't said that correctly. We took the bus to the Silver Temple. We went to the, Gion district, Karamachi garden, shopping center food hall. Yeah. We really kinda did explore Kyoto, but there's still a lot more that we could see. I'm I'm quite aware of that.

Doug Collins [00:16:03]:

And we also, did a lot of walking there as well. So we'll make sure you got some good shoes, but very relaxed. The weather was lovely for walking.

Tracy Collins [00:16:12]:

Yeah. Yeah. It was. And then day 17, we took the the bullet train again with the Shinkansen to to Hiroshima. So we stayed at a hotel near this train station, which was pretty good because when we could get the the tram so the first thing we did this afternoon is we took the the tram down to see the atomic bomb dome, didn't we? Peace dome.

Doug Collins [00:16:29]:

We did. And that was still provoking.

Tracy Collins [00:16:31]:

It was. I found Hiroshima quite Quite hard hitting, actually. So, I mean, the next day we decided to take a day trip. So to Miyajima Island, see the Tora gate. We took the ferry and the train backwards and forwards to Hiroshima. It was actually a really easy trip to do. And then in the afternoon, we actually went to the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for the Victor. And so we divided it up in a way between the 2 days to do

Doug Collins [00:16:56]:

that. We did. It was a conscious effort to split it so it wasn't just too overwhelming in one day. Yeah. Absolutely. But I would highly recommend that if, obviously, if you go to Hiroshima, that you'd

Tracy Collins [00:17:01]:

that Absolutely. But I would highly recommend that if, obviously, if you go to Hiroshima that you that you do do the museum and learn all a little bit more about it. Then on day 19, we took the train to Osaka. And then I basically asked in Osaka, Doug decided to go back to Kyoto, didn't you?

Doug Collins [00:17:17]:

I Did, because I'd heard good things about the Kyoto Railway Museum, and I am so glad I did. It was wonderful. I was there for a few hours after I Spent the whole day there. It was, again, just a real enthusiastic dream because it wasn't just a question of looking at trains. It was actually how The systems work. I won't bore you with the details, but it's just so interesting.

Tracy Collins [00:17:39]:

Yeah. And then you you did get lost on the way back there, didn't you?

Doug Collins [00:17:42]:

Yeah. The the the train stations are are like an absolute labyrinth. And I knew where I wanted to go, but Absolute labyrinth. And I knew where I wanted to go, but that was not so easy because I had no working phone, no working Wi Fi, and Everywhere looks the same, and there's just so many thousands of people there. So many signs, but none were the ones that I wanted. So, yes, I was walking back to the apartment. It's trying to get out of the train station.

Tracy Collins [00:18:08]:

Eventually eventually got you back The hotel did not. And then we had dinner at a a British pub near the station. So day 20 was only full day that we have in Osaka. And if there's anything I would change about itinerary is that I would've added more time in Osaka because I really, really liked Osaka a lot, and we really didn't get a Chance to see as much as I wanted to. We did visit the sky building. We went down to the Totonbori, I don't know how to pronounce this either, excuse my pronunciation, Area and canal, which was lots of different, food stalls and, lots of street food. It was just a very vibrant area. Some just fantastic places to eat with lots of different decorations outside the buildings.

Tracy Collins [00:18:51]:

And, yeah, it it was really cool.

Doug Collins [00:18:54]:

So So next time we visit Japan, we'll probably start there?

Tracy Collins [00:18:57]:

Yes. I think so. Spend a lot a lot longer in Osaka. I think probably an extra 2 days really to get Kinda get a feel for the area a bit more. And then basically, on our last day, we just had the airport limousine to Osaka Airport where we were flying out to go to South Korea. So that was basically a quick overview, really, of what we did.

Doug Collins [00:19:17]:

It is. The the airport limousine, I should say, is a member of Cove's company. So it was a Cove, not a not a car. No.

Tracy Collins [00:19:25]:

It was it was literally a few minute walk from the hotel. We we went to the bakery, got a few snacks, and then jumped onto the limousine bus and straight to Osaka airport because, it it was just easier to do that on this particular occasion and and not not very expensive. And actually, when we spoke to the hotel about the best way, they they said take the limousine, boss. It's straightforward.

Doug Collins [00:19:45]:

That's right. And it was 5 minutes walk from the hotel we're staying in as well, which made it even easy.

Tracy Collins [00:19:50]:

Yeah. Absolutely. So then, yeah. So then after that, we flew on to South Korea. So that as I say, this episode of the podcast was really just to give you a quick overview of the places

that we went And what we did, as I say, we will write this up in a far more detailed article. We'll also talk a little bit more in detail about the different things that we did in Tokyo, things we did in Kyoto, a little bit more about Nagano, Takayama, Kanazawa, and what we included. But really, in this episode, it was just to give everybody an overview and in the next episode of the Global Travel Planning Podcast, we're gonna be sharing some of our tips for first time visitors, things that we came across that we thought, oh, this is interesting. We we made notes, didn't we?

Doug Collins [00:20:31]:

And the things that we maybe have got slightly wrong, we should've done Will do definitely better next time.

Tracy Collins [00:20:37]:

Yeah. That's for sure. Because we will be visiting Japan again, 100%. We absolutely both loved it, didn't we?

Doug Collins [00:20:42]:

We certainly did. Yeah. We love the people and the place.

Tracy Collins [00:20:45]:

So that wraps up this week's episode. You can find links to everything we talked about in the show notes at [tracetravelsintown.com/forward/epsil 13](https://tracetravelsintown.com/forward/epsil-13) that just leaves me to say until next week's episode. Happy global travel planning from me.