



Japan by Rail

with Scott McGregor

Tokyo • Kyoto • Kanazawa • Niigata • Sendai • Sapporo

11 – 27 October 2012 (17 days)



Renaissance
Tours

The Daily Telegraph

The Sunday Telegraph

THE AUSTRALIAN 



Tour Leader

Scott McGregor

Scott McGregor has been involved in the media for over 30 years as an actor, presenter, writer and producer. Graduating from NIDA in 1979, he appeared in a wide range of stage, film and TV roles and has presented and hosted numerous prime-time ratings winners including two series of his own Railway Adventures. He is currently working on his third book and operates 'Ruwenzori' – his Orient Express style tourist retreat near Mudgee NSW.

“Numerous train journeys I have made around Japan simply confirm being spoilt for choice when planning a Railway Adventure there. Futuristic ‘bullet trains’, dependable local expresses, opulent sleepers and fleets of primed and polished steam locomotives are just some of the offerings on the mind-bogglingly efficient network. Japan’s trains penetrate almost every corner and flash across the nation’s iconic scenery, arriving into the heart of its blazing cities and for me, zipping across the landscape with a crisp Bento Box lunch on my table is one of train travels’ most exquisite pleasures.”

Scott



At a glance ...

- visit Honshu Island from south to north, using trains only plus 3 days in lesser-visited Sapporo, on Hokkaido Island
- More than 20 railway experiences on the Shinkansen, bullet and limited express trains, steam trains, mountain railways and cable cars
- No luggage to be carried on and off the trains – suitcases will be transferred separately
- 1 night in a traditional ryokan in Hakone
- 2 full days in Kyoto and its UNESCO listed monuments



Japan by Rail

With over 20,000 kilometres of track and 26,000 departures per day there is surely no better way to explore Japan than by rail. Epitomised by the famous Shinkansen ('bullet trains') and busy metro lines, the Japanese rail story also comprises numerous private railways, vintage diesel railcars on scenic local branch-lines and a number of immaculately maintained heritage and steam railways, such as the 'Paleo Express' and the Ban'etsu C57 180 Steam Locomotive.

In addition to Tokyo and Kyoto, this tour will reveal many of Japan's less visited cities such as Hikone, Kanazawa and Sendai. For a change of pace, we have arranged overnights in a 'ryokan' in the foothills of Mount Fuji and at a resort overlooking Hakodate Bay. For many, the highlight of the tour may well be the three days in Sapporo, your base for exploring the natural beauty of Hokkaido.

To expedite your train travel, your luggage will be transferred between the major cities by separate luggage truck, leaving you free to enjoy the ride. Whether you are a rail enthusiast or just love travelling by train, this tour entirely by rail will reveal one of the most fascinating countries in the world.

ITINERARY

Thu 11 Oct 2012

Australia – Tokyo

Morning departure from SYD/MEL on Cathay Pacific flights via Hong Kong. Arrival in Tokyo Haneda Airport at 9:35 pm on CX542 and transfer to your hotel. If travelling from PER/ADL/BNE on other flights, airport transfers can be organised on request (at own cost).

Fri 12 Oct

Tokyo

After a welcome breakfast and briefing with Scott McGregor and fellow travellers, begin your exploration of Tokyo with a walk in Ueno Park and a visit to Tokyo National Museum where more than 90,000 items make up a collection considered to be the finest assembly of Japanese art in the world.

After lunch, visit Sensoji, also known as the Asakusa Kannon Temple. The Buddhist temple in honour of 'Kannon', the goddess of mercy, was completed in 645 CE, making it Tokyo's oldest temple. The Nakamise shopping street leads from the outer gate to the temple's second gate, the Hozomon. Here you can purchase local arts and crafts as well as local snacks. Finish with a visit to the Akihabara electronics shopping district. (BL)

Sat 13 Oct

Tokyo

This morning you will visit the Meiji Shrine, dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shoken, and the Harajuku District. Continue to the beautiful East Garden of the Imperial Palace, which dates back to the 16th century, and its famous landmark, the Nijubashi, a double-arched stone bridge built in 1888.

After lunch you have the option of an afternoon at leisure to further explore Tokyo on your own. Or begin your experience of the Japanese railway system with a journey by shinkansen ('bullet train') outside Tokyo to Omiya (25 min) to visit the National Railway Museum. Japan's oldest and largest railway museum reopened in 2007 after extensive renovations. Return to Tokyo in the evening. (BL)

Sun 14 Oct

Tokyo – Gora

A short journey by shinkansen (40 min) brings you to Kumagaya. Here you board the Paleo Express, pulled by a C58-363 type steam locomotive. Constructed in 1944, the Paleo Express runs the 57 km between Kumagaya Station and Mitsumineguchi Station in 2hr 40min. The inspiration for the train's name came from an ancient marine dinosaur, the Paleo Paradoxia, which was discovered to have lived in the Chichibu area more than 20 million years ago.

Arrive in Mitsumineguchi in time for a break for lunch, before continuing by coach to the Yamanashi Prefectural Maglev Exhibition Centre, which displays the work carried out on the Yamanashi maglev test line. Afterwards transfer to Gora, in the hills of central Honshu, for dinner and overnight in a traditional Japanese inn ('ryokan'). (BD)

Mon 15 Oct

Gora – Kyoto

After breakfast at the ryokan, walk to Gora station and take the cable car, followed by ropeway, to Togendai, a port at the northern end of Lake Ashi. You will have some free time in these tranquil surroundings before returning to Gora.



Tokyo



Paleo Express



Golden Pavilion Kyoto



Shinkansen

From Gora, transfer on the Hakone Tozan Railway, Japan's oldest mountain railway. The spectacular upper section of the mountain railway – from Gora to Hakone-Yumoto – is served by the small mountain trains, which wind through a narrow, densely wooded valley over many bridges and tunnels, stopping at small stations along the way and changing directions at three switchbacks. Disembark the train for a visit to the Hakone Open Air Museum. Constantly changing with the seasons, the spectacular grounds are the permanent home for approximately 120 works by well-known modern and contemporary sculptors. Continue on the Hakone Tozan Railway to the end of the line in Odawara. Here you board a shinkansen for Kyoto (approx. 2 hr). Dinner at your hotel. (BD)

Tue 16 Oct

Kyoto

Today enjoy a full day tour of Kyoto, starting with a visit to Nijo Castle, one of Kyoto's many UNESCO world heritage sites. Continue to the famous Golden Pavilion, followed by the 17th century Kiyomizu Temple. Finally, end the day with a walk through the Gion District, the domain of the famous geisha and maiko (apprentice geisha) of Kyoto. (BL)

Wed 17 Oct

Kyoto

This morning you have the option of a half-day at leisure to further explore Kyoto on your own. Or join Scott for a visit to the Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum. The museum features a fan shaped locomotive house with an impressive array of steam locomotives, including one in operation on the museum's own exhibition track.

In the afternoon, visit the Arashiyama region, in the north-west of the city. Enjoy a walk through the area's vast bamboo groves, take tea in Okochi Sanso, a private villa. Later, board the Sagano Scenic Railway through the stunning Hozu River valley to Kameoka, before returning to Kyoto by train. (B)

Thu 18 Oct

Kyoto – Kanazawa

Depart Kyoto for Hikone by express train (1 hr). Enjoy a guided tour of the impressive Hikone Castle, which retains its original form. Adjacent to the castle is the lovely Genkyuen Garden, dotted with islands, bridges and pavilions.

After lunch continue by local trains (2hr 30min) to Kanazawa, a city with a strong cultural identity, somewhat shielded from outside influences by its location between the Shirayama Mountains and the Sea of Japan. (BL)

Fri 19 Oct

Kanazawa

Morning guided tour of Kanazawa starting with Kenrokuen Garden. Continue to the Nagamachi Samurai Quarter and Nomura House for an insight into the life of Japan's legendary warriors, the Samurai. Finally, visit Myoryuji Temple – a fascinating blend of traditional temple architecture, hidden doors, passageways and hidden escape routes.

After lunch at a local restaurant, the remainder of the day is at leisure. (BL)

Sat 20 Oct

Kanazawa – Niigata

After a morning at leisure, depart Kanazawa by limited express train along the Sea of Japan to Niigata (3hr 45min). (B)

Sun 21 Oct

Niigata – Sendai

Depart Niigata on board the Ban'etsu C57-180 steam locomotive for a journey of 126 km to Aizu Wakamatsu (approx 3hr 45min). This steam locomotive was in service from 1946 to 1969. After restoration it recommenced operations as a heritage tourist train in 1999. The interior of the train and the uniform of the crew are designed in a style unique to the Taisho era (1912-26) when the Ban'etsu line was opened.

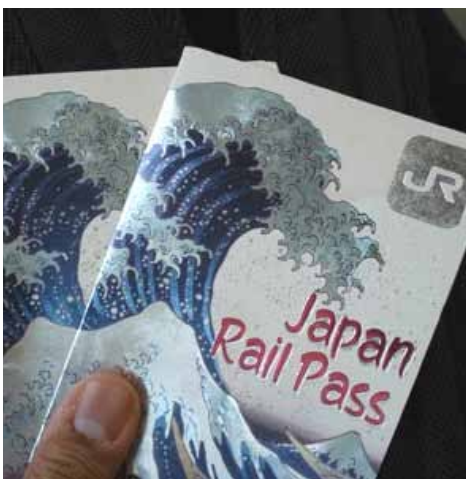
On arrival at Aizu Wakamatsu, commence a city tour with a visit to Tsurugajo Castle, followed by the Byakkotai Memorial Hall, one of the two museums devoted to the Byakkotai (White Tiger Corps), a unit of young Aizu soldiers who committed seppuku when they saw their castle engulfed in flames. Late afternoon departure by train to Sendai (2hr 20min). Evening at leisure. (B)

Mon 22 Oct

Sendai

Full day city tour of Sendai, a large and modern city whose coastal areas were devastated by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami on 11 March 2011. Sendai has made an impressively fast recovery and is working hard to regain its reputation as 'the city of trees'. In the morning visit the ruins of the once impenetrable Sendai Castle which offer magnificent views over the city and ocean. Continue to Zuihoden Hall, the impressive mausoleum of the Date family who controlled northern Japan in the late 16th century and into the Edo period.

In the afternoon, there will be a special behind-the-scenes visit to the Shinkansen Repair Works in Sendai. (BL)



Japan Rail Pass



Geisha



Hikone Castle

Tue 23 Oct **Sendai – Hakodate**

Today travel from the island of Honshu to the island of Hokkaido via the Seikan Tunnel, the longest undersea tunnel in the world (approx. 54 km, of which 23 are under the seabed). First, travel by shinkansen and express train (2hr 20min) via Shin-Aomori to Tappi-Kaitei Station, one of two railway stations located within the tunnel. Here you will take a cable car to the fascinating Seikan Tunnel Memorial Museum. After a guided tour, take the cable car back to Tappi-Kaitei and continue by express train (1hr 10min) via the Seikan Tunnel to Hakodate on the island of Hokkaido. (BL)



Hikari platform

Wed 24 Oct **Hakodate – Sapporo**

Morning at leisure to enjoy the leisure facilities and excellent views of La Vista Hakodate Bay Resort. In the afternoon, depart Hakodate for Sapporo by express train (3hr 30min). (B)

Thu 25 Oct **Sapporo**

Journey out of Sapporo by express train and coach to Daisetsuzan, Hokkaido's largest national park (approx. 2hr 15min, one-way). The park preserves a densely forested, mountainous area of virtually unspoiled wilderness. You will explore the national park by road and also take the Mount Kurodake Ropeway to admire the view from 1,984 metres above sea level. (BL)



Sagano Scenic Railway

Fri 26 Oct **Sapporo**

Enjoy a morning excursion by coach to Otaru. Start with a guided tour of Otaru Railway Museum and its rail yard which exhibits several full size trains. Then, take a city tour including Otaru's Canal Zone and the remains of the Temiya Freight narrow gauge line, which was originally established in the late 19th century to transport coal and marine products. After lunch, the afternoon is free to further explore Sapporo on your own.

This evening, celebrate the conclusion of the tour with a special farewell dinner. (BLD)

Sat 27 Oct **Depart Sapporo**

Morning at leisure. Transfer to Sapporo Airport for afternoon departure on Cathay Pacific flight CX581 to Hong Kong, connecting with overnight flights to Australia (overnight in Hong Kong required for passengers from PER). (B)



Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa

Sun 28 Oct **Arrive Australia**

Early afternoon arrival in SYD/MEL/BNE/ADL. Evening arrival in PER.



Zuihoden, Sendai

TOUR PRICES ...

Per person, twin-share **AUD 9,850**

Single supplement* **AUD 1,750**

Deposit (per person) **AUD 500**

Final payment **10 August 2012**

* Single travellers may request to share.
Please advise at time of booking.

TOUR CODE

RLWY JAPAN

SUGGESTED AIRLINE

Cathay Pacific (via Hong Kong)

Please contact Renaissance

Tours for current airfares and reservations.

TOUR PRICES INCLUDE

- 16 nights accommodation in centrally located 3- and 4-star hotels with daily breakfast (B)
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) incl. special welcome breakfast and farewell dinner
- Transfers on arrival & departure (if arriving / departing on suggested Cathay Pacific flights)
- 14-day JR Rail Pass ('Green Cars') including seat reservations
- Comfortable air-conditioned coach transportation
- Comprehensive sightseeing including local guides and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (one piece per person)
- Inter-city luggage transfer service

DO NOT INCLUDE

- International flights
- Transfers on arrival & departure if not travelling on suggested flights
- Drinks with meals, except for farewell dinner
- Items of a personal nature (e.g. telephone, laundry, minibar etc.)
- Travel insurance



Ryokan ...

Ryokan are Japanese style inns found throughout the country, especially in hot spring resorts. More than just a place to sleep, ryokan are an opportunity to experience the traditional Japanese lifestyle and hospitality, incorporating elements such as tatami floors, futon beds, Japanese style baths and local cuisine. Meals are typically kaiseki ryori (Japanese haute cuisine) that feature local and seasonal specialties.

YOUR HOTELS ...

Park Hotel Tokyo
Tokyo
★★★★

Setsugetsuka Ryokan
Gora

Hotel Granvia
Kyoto
★★★★

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel
Kanazawa
★★★★

Hotel Okura
Niigata
★★★

Hotel Metropolitan
Sendai
★★★

La Vista Hakodate Bay Resort
Hakodate
★★★★

Hotel Clubby
Sapporo
★★★★

NB: Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.



Hakone Tozan Railway



Sendai Castle

TERMS & CONDITIONS

How to Book

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit.

Deposit / Final Payments

Your deposit is due at the time of booking and is used to pay hotel, airline, performance tickets and/or other deposits. It is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation.

Final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make the final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit.

Payments are accepted in cash and by cheque, bank transfer, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

Cancellation & Refunds

a) Cancellation by You - Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	Forfeit of deposit
59 – 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 – 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 – 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above, cancellation charges may apply for additional arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours, such as air tickets, hotels and travel insurance premium. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

b) Cancellation by Us - We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for force majeure, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. No further compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability.

Cancellation and/or amendment fees may apply for additional travel arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours.

Passports, Visas and Vaccinations

All travellers must be in a possession of a valid passport – most countries require a 6-month validity from your date of entry or exit. For some countries (e.g. China, Vietnam, India, Russia), visas are included in the tour cost and will be arranged by Renaissance Tours prior to travel. For other countries, it is your responsibility to ensure you have the appropriate visa(s).

You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance

for international tours. Your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours.

Fitness and Participation

For the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

Terms & Conditions

You can find the full terms & conditions on the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found at www.renaissancetours.com.au or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Hakone Mountain Railway



Hakone Ropeway



Cover image: Shinkansen passing by the Mount Fuji
Back page image: Ban'etsu C57 180



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