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AUTHENTIC JAPAN - LUXURY CRUISE

Set sail to discover the age-old traditions and dazzling modernity of Japan on this 13-day cruise aboard *_Le Soléal_*. Throughout your journey, you will benefit from an excursion included per person per port of call, to choose from a selection offered by PONANT. During this cruise, explore the picturesque city of Chiran and its ancestral history from Kagoshima, discover the cultural heritage of Nagasaki, or visit Himeji's emblematic castle. The diversity of experiences on offer promises you intense and varied moments (to discover the full range of excursions, go to the itinerary tab). At the whim of the trade winds in the Sea of Japan, *_Le Soléal_* will sail eastbound for the charming feudal city of Karatsu. Further south, Nagasaki remains in the world's imagination as the symbol of nuclear horror. Fortunately, in the same way as Hiroshima, the city has become one of the archipelago's most peaceful towns as well as one of its most attractive. The warm and cosmopolitan city unveils its many riches throughout its narrow streets: the Oura Catholic Church and its gardens, the Suwa Shrine, the sumptuous Buddhist temples... After a stopover in Kagoshima, you're off to Miyazaki, a city steeped in history and considered the birthplace of Japan. The jagged coastlines of the captivating Miyajima Island, also known as Itsukushima, come into view, and the vermilion Torii of the emblematic Shinto Shrine of Itsukushima, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, unfolds before you in a lush forest setting. Time here seems stuck in the feudal era: the frenetic energy and modernity of the large Japanese metropolises make way for striking serenity and tranquillity, and hundreds of deer wander between its spiritual and architectural treasures. Then, you will visit Itozaki, a charming coastal town

surrounded by green hills. After this stop, you will discover Imabari, known for its superb seascapes and its textile creations, especially the famous Imabari towels, a symbol of ancestral know-how combining quality and elegance. After a unique port of call in the historic city of Himeji, walk the ancient pilgrimage routes of Kumano Kod in Shingu, registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, connecting several religious sites nestling in tropical nature. The gateway to the enchanting Ise Bay and its sumptuous ria coast, Toba invites you to enjoy a unique moment in this historic city, residence of the Imperial family. Among other things, you will have the opportunity to admire the most important Shinto shrine in Japan, Ise-jingu. Finally, for a grand finale, your journey will end in Osaka, your



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disembarkation port.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Busan

With around four million inhabitants, Busan is the second largest metropolis on South Korea, after Seoul. This dynamic harbour city, located in the south-east, surrounded by the warm waters of the Sea of Japan, benefits from a mild, pleasant climate. You'll find delightful simply to stroll around the lively streets and explore the city's outstanding cultural heritage of art galleries, museums, and Buddhist sites, such as the Haedong Yonggungsa temple, which elegantly sits on the waterfront. Rich too in magnificent beaches and superlative natural landscapes, Busan's peaceful atmosphere will win you over, as will its inhabitants, whom you'll have the pleasure of meeting.

Day 2 - Karatsu

Karatsu Bay is edged with long sandy beaches and a huge pine forest that was planted over 350 years ago to protect the coast from the winds and tides of the Genkai Sea. From the top of the donjon of Karatsu Castle or Mount Kagami, you will be able to admire magnificent panoramas. In the north of the Higashi-Matsuura Peninsula, the waves have eroded the lava plateau and carved a magnificent natural site, the seven Nanatsugama Caves, out of the basalt. The city of Karatsu is famous for the quality of its pottery, which is influenced by the craftsmanship of nearby Korea. Very fine pieces are displayed in the city's galleries and at Karatsu Castle, alongside magnificent samurai armour.

Day 3 - Nagasaki

Located on the north-west coast of Kyushu, Nagasaki will impress you by its rich heritage. Despite the destruction in

1945, you can visit several ancient sites, including the beautiful 19th-century Catholic Church of Oura and its garden, the sanctuary of Suwa Shrine or several Buddhist temples. A visit to the Atomic Bomb Museum gives you insight into the extent of the damage caused by the nuclear attack. Close by, a walk in the Memorial Peace Park leads you to a collection of objets d'art offered as a gift from Japan to the world.

Day 4 - Kagoshima

The seaside city of Kagoshima, at the south of Kyushu Island, is best known for Sakurajima, an active volcano that faces Kinko Bay. A visit to this busy metropolis will remind you just how much the volcano is part of the inhabitants' everyday life: in the wake of the almost daily eruptions, a delicate layer of ash settles on everything. The top of a buried torii (traditional Japanese gate) measuring three metres that was 'swallowed up' by a giant lava flow in 1914 can still be seen. The power of nature will send a shiver down your spine.

Day 5 - Miyazaki

The cradle of Japanese mythology, Miyazaki is a hidden treasure on the southern coast of Kyushu. Known for its climate, its golden beaches and its spectacular rocky formations, it is an invitation to exploration and contemplation. In the heart of the city, the Miyazaki-jing Shinto shrine stands majestically, surrounded by ancient forests and peaceful gardens, in which an atmosphere of serenity reigns. Make the most of the authenticity of this city with fascinating local culture and, during the visit of the Miyazaki Shrine, fall under the spell of the kagura, a dance and song performance by the shrine's priests and helpers.

Day 6 - Uwajima

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Located on the west coast of Shikoku island, Uwajima will delight lovers of history and traditional customs. The magnificent Uwajima Castle was built in the 17th-century by the powerful Date clan and has a beautiful ornamental garden and bridge. The much-visited Taga Shrine is dedicated to fertility and is full of phalluses. As for eating, you must taste jakoten, a local delicacy based on fried fish.

Day 7 - Tamano

Located on the island of Honshu, hugging the banks of the Seto Inland Sea, Tamano is a popular destination thanks to its sun-drenched climate. Upon arrival, marvel at the way in which the city has been built along the coast at the foot of a deep, dark forest. In the area surrounding Tamano, stroll down the streets of Kurashiki, known as the 'white-walled city' in a nod to the pretty façades of the houses that line the streets of this ancient Edo-period trading town. Another major regional attraction is the Seto Ohashi bridge. Its 12.5 kilometres make it the world's longest double-decker bridge.

Day 8 - Itozaki

Jewels of the heart of Hiroshima Prefecture, Itozaki invites travelers to a timeless escape. Bordered by the Seto Inland Sea, it captivates with its landscapes blending the gentle shimmer of its waters and the silent majesty of its mountains. Itozaki is a journey into the soul of Japan, a haven where time stands still. The Japanese city will serve as the starting point for discovering, just a short distance away, the historic Onomichi, renowned for its nearly twenty temples and shrines.

Day 9 - Hiroshima & Miyajima

Visiting Hiroshima is a moving experience. The town spreads along Honshu Island, along the inside coasts of Seto. While

firmly focused on the future, Hiroshima doesn't forget its past, and a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Genbaku Dome is a must. You'll enjoy the city's modern, cosmopolitan atmosphere and effervescent nightlife just as much as the peaceful stillness of its natural parkland areas such as splendid Shukkei-en, the town's historic garden.

At the heart of the Inland Sea, Miyajima, the "island sanctuary" will reveal its treasures. In the background you will see the Shinto Grand Sanctuary, whose entrance is guarded by a magnificent vermilion "Torii". Considered to be one of the most beautiful sites in the Japanese islands, you will be transported by the unique character and the serenity of this sacred site.

Day 10 - Himeji

You may get the impression that you've already seen Himeji Castle, as it has been featured many times on the big screen. The feudal edifice seems to spread its wings over the town like a white heron – in fact, its nickname is the castle of the white heron. Originally started in the 15th century and then rebuilt in the 17th-century, it is a UNESCO World Heritage site. At its feet lies the gorgeous Koko-en garden, which has nine different gardens designed to flourish in each of the four seasons.

Day 11 - Shingu

To the south-west of the Japanese archipelago, Shingu is a port town in the Kansai region. Founded in 1933, it belongs to the peninsula of Kii, the country's largest. Take a trip around the Kumano Sanzan religious complex dedicated to three sacred mountains and home to two Shinto temples, Kumano Hongu Taisha and Kumano Hayatama Taisha. The latter features the famous sacred nagi tree, said to have been planted around 1159. Pilgrims flock to these two sanctuaries that feature on

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UNESCO's World Heritage list. Hop on a boat and journey to the Dorokyo Gorge, a natural beauty spot carved out by the emerald waters of the Kumano river.

Day 12 - Toba

Toba is a coastal city located in Japan's Mie Prefecture, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Situated in the Ise-Shima National Park, Toba has given its name to majestic bay sheltering a string of small islands, famous for the beauty of their forests and the production of cultured pearls. You will have the possibility of discovering the Ise Shrine, residence of the Imperial family and venerated by the Japanese people as the "soul of Japan".

Day 13 - Osaka

Like its big sister Tokyo, Osaka is the product of ancestral traditions and amazing technological innovations. And despite its size, its location on the Pacific Ocean give it a sense of serenity. The main historic landmark is the 16th century Osaka Castle, which stands proud in the midst of majestic skyscrapers. The lively streets of Dotomburi and the bizarre Shinsekai district attract thousands of locals and visitors. A multitude of restaurants offer menus full of regional specialities: takoyaki, made with octopus, and other succulent dishes such as kushikatsu kebabs.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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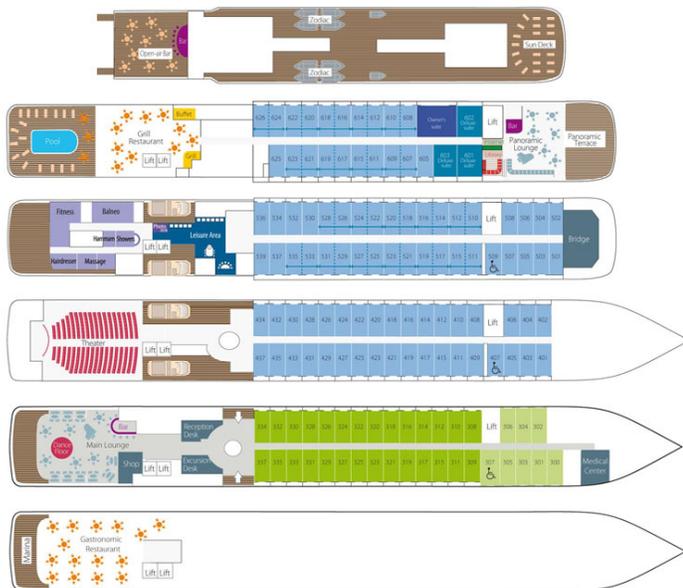
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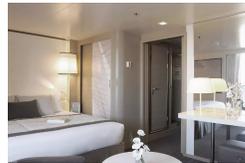
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Superior Stateroom

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