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HIDDEN JAPAN: FROM HOKKAIDO TO HIROSHIMA CRUISE

Dreaming of an unforgettable journey through East Asia? Swan Hellenic invites you to explore the shores of Japan and Korea on a boutique small ship cruise from Otaru to Hiroshima. This expertly curated itinerary showcases a captivating blend of northern landscapes, ancient traditions, and dynamic port cities across Japan, South Korea, and beyond. Sail through storied regions along the Sea of Japan, from Hokkaido's Otaru to the rich cultural heritage of Ogi, Sado Island, Sakata, Maizuru, and Sakaiminato. In Busan, South Korea, discover vibrant markets and coastal charm before returning to Japan's southern shores. Cruise the historic Kanmon Strait, uncovering centuries of maritime legacy along the way. Your journey concludes in Hiroshima, a city of peace, resilience, and renewal. With immersive cultural encounters and breathtaking coastal scenery, this East Asia cruise with Swan Hellenic offers enriching exploration for curious, discerning travelers.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Otaru

An important port on Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, Otaru retains original architecture. Restored warehouses along its canal, lined with Victorian street lamps, house restaurants and boutiques selling sake, music boxes and renowned Otaru glass. Rooted in the herring industry, the town's trading history is evident from Hokkaido's first railway line terminal to the Herring Mansion on the outskirts, once owned by wealthy herring fishermen.

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Day 2 Hakodate

The city of Hakodate in Hokkaido is Japan's northernmost island and is well-known for its seafood, for sale daily at the morning market. Mount Hakodate, reached by gondola, watches over the bustling city. While the area is rich in hot springs, it is best known for the famous snow monkeys who bathe in the hot springs of Yunokawa Onsen at the Hakodate City Tropical Botanical Garden.

Day 3 Sakata

Sakata, a port city on the Mogami river, thrived on rice and safflower trade. The traditional 1893 Sankyo Rice Storehouses, shaded by zelkova trees, are now a cultural hub with shops. The city's quiet streets feature preserved, wealthy Edo-era homes, including the Honma Museum of Art with fine art and gardens. South of the river, The Ken Domon Museum honours the famed photographer's powerful work, including images of Hiroshima survivors.

Day 4 Sado Island, Ogi

Sado, Japan's sixth largest island, has a quaint port at Ogi known for tarai-bune, traditional wooden boats. The island is also famous for its world-renowned taiko drummers, continuing a rich cultural tradition. Once a place of exile for artists and academics, Sado now draws visitors to its rugged coasts, hidden beaches and lush terrain for outdoor activities.

Day 5 Maizuru

The port city of Maizuru in south-central Japan served as a major naval base and post-WWII repatriation port, where over 660,000 Japanese returned home - this history is remembered at the poignant Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum. Its scenic harbour, framed by forested hills, is overlooked by Goro

Sky Tower atop Mt. Gorogatake. Brick Park evokes the city's industrial past with Meiji-era warehouses housing the unique World Brick Museum.

Day 6 Sakaiminato

A haven for seafood lovers, manga fans and nature enthusiasts, Sakaiminato's offerings are fairly eclectic for the seemingly slow-paced port town. Fish markets and world-class seafood restaurants line the streets, offering delights including local delicacy, Matsuba snow crab. You can also feast on Pacific bluefin tuna, Sakaiminato salmon, Natsuki rock oysters, swordtip squid and plenty more. The city was also once home to local hero, Shigeru Mizuki, a celebrated manga comic artist. Visit the Mizuki Shingeru museum for a fascinating insight into his life and the world of manga. Stretch your legs and enjoy a hike up the volcanic Mount Daisen, the highest mountain in the region (1730m). Or you may wish to take a gentler trek through the tranquil and restorative beech and cedar forests whilst connecting with nature and indulging in the Japanese pastime of 'forest bathing'.

Day 7 Hagi

In Japan's feudal era, Hagi was governed by the powerful Mori Clan. Many old buildings are open to the public, bearing witness to the samurai who played a role in Japan's Meiji Restoration. Hagi is rich in shrines, temples, and historical artefacts. Hagi Castle's ruins are in Shizuki Park, famous for its spring cherry blossoms and the wooded slopes of Mt. Shizuki. Hagi Urugami Museum exhibits ukiyo-e woodblock prints and ceramics.

Day 8 Busan

Busan, South Korea's second city, blends beaches and mountains with boutiques, lively cafes and delicious seafood in

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food alleys. The 120m-tall Busan Tower offers a sense of the skyscraper cityscape. Six beaches, including Haeundae and Gwangalli, attract visitors year-round. Gamcheon Culture Village, previously a slum, is now a kaleidoscopic haven of art nestled on the coastal mountain foothills, affectionately dubbed the "Machu Picchu of Busan."

Day 9 Moji

Former trading hub Moji wonderfully mixes old-world architecture with natural beauty. Mojiko Retro district's western-style Meiji-era red brick buildings line the waterfront. Mekari Park offers panoramic views of the Kanmon Strait and Bridge. Across the sea in Shimonoseki, remnants of a traditional samurai residence and garden from the Edo era remain in Chofu. Further out, a modern reconstruction of the 17th-century Kokura Castle stands proudly.

Day 9 Cruising Kanmon Strait

Sailing through the Kanmon Strait is challenging with strong currents and an S-shaped bend. One of the world's busiest shipping lanes, the strait cuts a dramatic 38 km (24 mi) channel, narrowing to 700 m (0.4 mi) at its tightest point. The graceful Kanmon Bridge, a 1,068-m (3,504-ft) suspension bridge, spans the waterway between Honshu and Kyushu. Shimonoseki overlooks the strait from Honshu, while Moji district stands watch from Kyushu.

Day 10 Beppu

Beppu is best known for Jigoku Meguri ("Boiling Hells") - seven vivid geothermal springs too hot for bathing but offering stunning colours, bubbling mud and soaring steam. Nearby, Mount Takasaki's 1,500 wild Japanese macaques can be seen up close at Takasakiyama Monkey Park. A short trip away, Usuki

features 60 stone-carved Buddhist statues in peaceful park grounds with feudal castle ruins and 1,000 cherry trees.

Day 11 Hiroshima

Hiroshima is a city of peace and resilience. The Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, vividly portrays the aftermath of the atomic bombing. Designed by Kenz Tange and inaugurated in 1955, the museum serves as a global symbol of peace, featuring a solemn cenotaph bearing the victims' names and the Flame of Peace, lit in 1964. The Genbaku Dome stands as the sole original structure left at the blast site.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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YOUR SHIP: MINERVA

YOUR SHIP: Minerva

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

The 5 star elegant Scandi-design boutique ship offers you an intimate setting from which you will be fully immersed in all the sights and scenery of your voyage. Introducing SH Minerva Minerva has been designed to journey to off the beaten path destinations and remote polar regions in style and comfort. The ship incorporates a PC5 ice-strengthened hull combined with extra-large stabilisers to make your journey as smooth as possible. Sophisticated Elegance We know how important outdoor space is, so our spacious, relaxing public spaces provide wide open, unobstructed views throughout the ship. The destination will always be in view. Your Wellbeing The safety & happiness of the guests is paramount to the 120-strong crew on board as well as the passionate expedition team who'll be serving up thrilling shore excursions and lasting memories. Cabin Types The 76 cabins including 6 suites have all the amenities you will need to feel comfortable including dressing gowns, hairdryers, personal safes and minibars. The stylish cabins all have desks, a dressing area and comfy seating. En suite bathrooms all feature glass-enclosed rain showers. Wheelchair access Guests who use wheelchairs must bring their own, as we have only a small number of wheelchairs stored

onboard for emergencies. To ensure ease of movement on the ship, wheelchairs and mobility aids must be no wider than 65cm. All mobility or medical equipment brought on board must be capable of being carried safely and must be declared before sailing. To ensure that all guests can safely evacuate during an emergency, guests requiring a wheelchair can only be accommodated in our ADA-accessible cabins. There is an Oceanview stateroom on Vega which is specifically designed to be completely ADA compliant and have a fully operable wheelchair-access wet unit. Vega has two lifts, serving every passenger deck apart from the Stargazing top deck, which is, therefore, more difficult to access, as are the Aft Marina and Swan's Nest forward observation platform. Also, we don't have special equipment to access the swimming pool, jacuzzi, or sauna. Otherwise, the ship is entirely at your disposal. Many of the expeditions ashore in remote places are by Zodiac. Boarding these boats and returning aboard can present challenges for wheelchair users, as can navigating uneven terrain. These challenges are by no means always insurmountable, though, and our highly experienced crew is trained to provide reliable advice and assistance. They will make every effort to ensure wheelchair-using guests enjoy a memorable experience at each destination. Our general guidance, however, is to recommend wheelchair users travel with a companion for their ease and enjoyment. If you prefer to remain aboard, our panoramic interiors and ample open decks ensure an immersive, intimate experience of your inspiring

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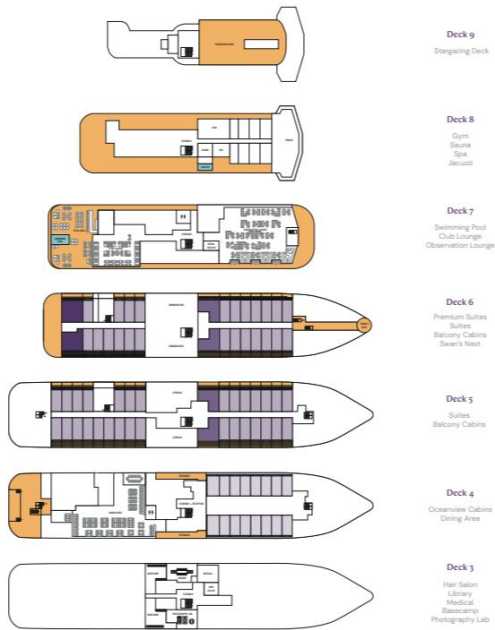
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