

# 2027 Secrets of Japan

## Sacred Lands and World Heritage

*with Dr. Justin M. Jacobs*

May 8–17, 2027



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May 8–17, 2027

From \$14,260

*double occupancy, per person*



## 2027 Secrets of Japan Sacred Lands and World Heritage

*with Dr. Justin M. Jacobs*

**Sailing from Osaka to Busan, you will encounter the best of Japan in all its fascinating variety. Ancient Buddhist and Shinto shrines compete for your attention with the stunning modernity of the cities you visit. The natural environment ranges from the geothermal pyrotechnics of Beppu's hot springs and the extraordinary biodiversity of the cedar forests on Yakushima Island to the serenity of the exquisitely designed and maintained gardens of Koraku-en and Sengan-en. Demonstrations of traditional crafts like bamboo weaving and calligraphy and a rich sampling of Japanese cuisine during meals ashore to give a sense of everyday life. And twice during the voyage—in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—you will have occasion to reflect on the devastation of nuclear war.**

Throughout the journey, you will be accompanied by Professor Justin M. Jacobs, your Great Courses expert and an historian of East Asia. Dr. Jacobs will share insights into Japanese culture and history on excursions and in presentations both formal and informal, with special emphasis on the importance of the UNESCO World Heritage sites on the itinerary.

Questions? Call 1-855-476-5080

TheGreatCoursesJourneys.com

# Your Journey Expert



**Dr. Justin M. Jacobs** is a Professor of History at American University. He earned a Ph.D in History from the University of California, San Diego. At American University, Professor Jacobs teaches courses on Japanese and Chinese history, the Silk Road, and voyages of exploration. He is the author of *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures*; *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State*; and *Plunder? How Museums Got Their Treasures*. He has also written for major newspapers such as *The Washington Post*. Professor Jacobs has created two Great Courses: *World Heritage Sites: Exploring the World's Greatest Places* and *World Heritage Sites II: 12 More of the World's Greatest Places*.

## Highlights

- Visit five distinct and fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the company of your professor, an expert in both Japan and UNESCO World Heritage sites.
- Explore Koraku-en Garden in Okayama, recognized as one of Japan's three finest landscape gardens
- Practice Zen mediation at the Daisho-in Temple on Miyajima before visiting Itsukushima Shrine and its famous torii gate.
- See 1,000-year-old Yakusugi cedar trees in the forests of Yakushima Island and learn about this UNESCO-designated site of extraordinary eco-diversity.
- Take time for reflection at the Peace Memorials in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Sample regional cuisines in meals ashore in Osaka, Okayama, and Kagoshima.



# Secrets of Japan: Sacred Lands and World Heritage

with Dr. Justin M. Jacobs

## Itinerary



### Day 1: Arrive in Osaka, Japan

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Arrive at Kansai International Airport (KIX), Osaka, Japan, where you will be met and transferred to the Imperial Hotel Osaka (or similar) for overnight. Since most flights arrive late in the day, there are no group activities scheduled for this evening. Check in, have a bite to eat, and get a good night's sleep.

**Accommodation:** Imperial Hotel Osaka (or similar)

### Day 2: Feudalism, Food, and Faith

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Today begins with a welcome breakfast at which you will meet your fellow travelers and your Great Courses expert before exploring some of Osaka's most important landmarks with your local guide. Begin at the magnificent Osaka Castle, the 16th-century stronghold of the warlord who came closest to unifying Japan before the Tokugawa shogunate.

A walk through Dotonbori—Osaka's neon-lit entertainment district and culinary hub—includes lunch at a trendy restaurant, before a visit to Shitennoji Temple. Founded in 593 CE by Prince Shotoku, a great patron of Buddhism, Shitennoji marks the official state embrace of Buddhism and the beginning of its deep influence on Japanese culture. In late afternoon, transfer to the port to embark *Le Soléal*.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch on Tour, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*

### Day 3: Koraku-en, Kura, and Kagura

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Your day begins by discovering the aesthetic and spiritual culture of Japan with visits to three of Okayama Prefecture's most important landmarks, beginning with the Koraku-en Garden, built in the late 17th century by the ruling Ikeda clan of Okayama. Recognized as one of the three best landscape gardens in Japan, it is designed with wide lawns, tranquil ponds, and carefully placed teahouses that are best enjoyed while strolling.

After lunch at a traditional Japanese restaurant, visit Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter, an Edo-period merchant district of white-walled warehouses (*kura*), lattice-fronted townhouses, and stone bridges. Close your day at the Shinto Yuga Shrine, where you witness a purification ritual followed by a ceremonial kagura dance performed by worshippers in ornate costumes and masks praying for harmony and good fortune.

**Including Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*



## Day 4: Meditation Two Ways

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Early this morning, arrive at Miyajima Island, where you will start at the Daisho-in Temple for a session of traditional Zen meditation. Afterward, visit the nearby Itsukushima Shrine, a holy place of Shintoism since its inception, famous for its “floating” torii gate. The shrine’s design, incorporating the surrounding forest and the sea, is recognized as the standard of beauty against which other shrines are compared.

During lunch aboard, *Le Soléal* sails to Hiroshima for a reflective visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum, where exhibits tell the story of the profound and history-altering events of August 6, 1945. Some of the displays can be unnerving, but they serve to remind you of the awesome destructive power of modern warfare.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*

## Day 5: Beppu Baths and Bamboo

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Beppu is one of the most famous geothermal destinations in the world, a place where the nearly 3,000 hot spring sources scattered throughout the city are used for hot baths, steam vents, sand and mud baths, and even for cooking. There are also springs far too hot for human use, known collectively as the “Hells of Beppu.” This morning, visit two of these “hells”—Chinoike Jigoku, where the pool of reddish iron-rich mud looks like boiling blood; and Umi Jigoku, whose gurgling waters are a deep cobalt blue.

Following these geothermal displays, travel to Beppu City Traditional Bamboo Crafts Center, where the techniques of weaving bamboo employed are much the same as they were 700 years ago. You will see master craftsmen at work and browse exhibits that showcase the growth of the craft from weaving simple objects like baskets and trays to creating designer furniture and large-scale sculptures.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*

## Day 6: Strolling Gardens, Sex, and Shintoism

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Your exploration of Uwajima begins at Nanraku-en Garden, a strolling garden in the same tradition as Okayama’s Koraku-en, where the highlight is a demonstration of the traditional art of Japanese calligraphy and an opportunity to try your hand at creating some simple characters.

At Taga Shrine, an ancient Shinto shrine where people would come to pray for health, longevity, and fertility, you will have the opportunity to visit the Dekoboko Shindo, a museum dedicated to expressions of human sexuality, including both fertility symbols and erotica from around the world. A short walk from the museum brings you to the Warei Shrine, known for its large stone torii gate and pleasant gardens.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*





## Day 7: Ancient Trees, Abundant Species

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The small circular island of Yakushima (about 17 miles across) contains a truly amazing variety of ecosystems—ranging from subtropical coastal areas to nearly alpine forests on the peaks of mountains that rise to 6,500 feet. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, the island’s unique biodiversity is described in detail at the Yakushima World Heritage Conservation Center and at the Yakusugi Museum, both of which you will visit. The museum is largely devoted to the famous Yakusugi cedar trees, a number of which are over 1,000 years old—and one, Jomon Sugi, at least 2,000.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*

## Day 8: Saurajima, Sengan-en, and the Shimazu Family

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Your full-day excursion in Kagoshima is divided between a morning visit to Mount Sakurajima, one of the world’s most active volcanos, and an afternoon stroll through Sengan-en Garden, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

On Mt. Sakurajima, which rivals Etna for frequency of activity, visit the Arimura Lava Observatory, built on top of a lava flow created by a major eruption in 1946. Follow a trail through the lava, stopping along the way for sweeping views of the city across Kagoshima Bay. Returning to the mainland, pause for lunch at a traditional Japanese restaurant, and then visit Sengan-en Garden, built in 1658 next to the residence of the Shimazu family, whose later generations were instrumental in the industrialization of Japan during the Meiji era.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*



## Day 9: Memorials, Merchants, and a Mansion

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Your last day in Japan starts with a visit to Nagasaki’s Atomic Bomb Museum, which chronicle’s the city’s devastation from “Fat Man,” the second of the two nuclear bombs dropped on Japan in August 1945, and to Ground Zero and the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park, where a collection of sculptures from around the world both commemorate the horrors of the bomb and look forward to a world where such weapons are never used again.

At nearby Dejima, visit the open-air museum that tells the story of the tightly knit community of Dutch traders who were the only contact between Japan and the Western world during the Tokugawa period of official isolation. End your tour at Glover Mansion and Garden, home to a community of Westerners living in Nagasaki in the 19th and 20th centuries. Glover’s garden is said to be the inspiration for the setting of the opera *Madame Butterfly*.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Soléal*





## Day 10: Busan, South Korea | Disembark

After breakfast aboard, disembark and transfer to Gimhae International Airport (PUS), for flights homeward.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included:

- Comprehensive 8-night cruise aboard the deluxe *Le Soléal*
- One pre-night at the Imperial Hotel Osaka (or similar) in Osaka, Japan (dinner on own) on May 8, 2027
- One PONANT EXPLORATIONS Tour Director dedicated to The Great Courses Journeys from the Pre-Night on May 8, 2027, through the end of the voyage/disembarkation on May 17, 2027
- Half day of touring in Osaka, and lunch, with transfer to pier for embarkation on May 9, 2027
- One exclusive The Great Courses Journeys onboard hosted cocktail reception
- Onboard lectures given by The Great Courses Journeys Expert
- Exclusive shore excursions in each port, thoughtfully designed in close collaboration with TGCJ Experts specifically for The Great Courses Journeys guests, led by local guides.
- Captain's gala dinners and cocktail receptions aboard ship
- All meals aboard ship including early riser's coffee and pastry, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner
- Meals ashore as listed in the itinerary
- Open bar aboard ship excluding premium alcohol, including select wines with lunch and dinner
- 24-hour complimentary room service
- Comprehensive pre-departure materials
- Unlimited WiFi (as available via satellite)
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage on official arrival and departure days, May 9, 2027 and May 17, 2027, respectively
- Port taxes and charges
- Gratuities to shipboard personnel, porters, guides, and drivers on tours

# Accommodations



## Luxury Ship *Le Soléal*

*Le Soléal* is part of PONANT EXPLORATIONS' Sisterships series of luxury small ships, featuring 132 cabins and suites accommodating up to 264 guests with highly personalized service. Designed with French elegance and advanced marine technology, she combines refined comfort with strong environmental stewardship, including Clean Ship certification and systems that reduce emissions and help protect sensitive marine environments. More compact than large ocean liners, *Le Soléal's* versatile design and relatively shallow draft allow access to smaller ports and coastal regions, while modern stabilizers ensure a smooth and comfortable voyage. **(8 nights)**

### **Imperial Hotel Osaka**

*Osaka, Japan*

Imperial Hotel Osaka is a luxury 5-star hotel known for refined service and elegant comfort. Built in 1996, it blends classic hospitality with modern amenities including spacious rooms, high-end dining across multiple restaurants, and a large fitness and pool club. **(1 night)**



POOL DECK



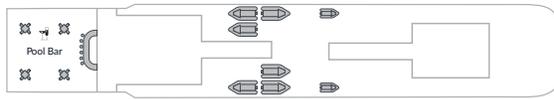
RESTAURANT



PRESTIGE STATEROOM

# Le Soléal Deck Plan & Pricing

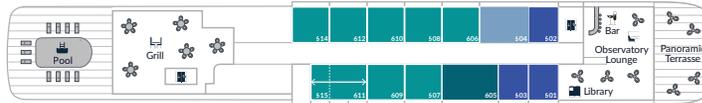
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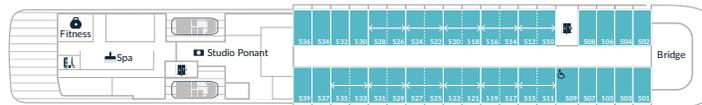
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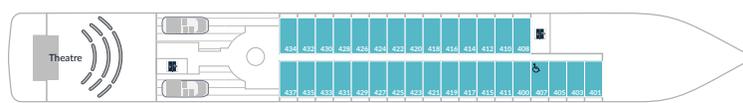
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DECK 5



DECK 4



DECK 3



DECK 2



- Superior Stateroom  
Deck 3
- Deluxe Suite  
Decks 3
- Prestige Stateroom  
Decks 4-5-6
- Deluxe Suite  
Deck 6
- ↔ Prestige Suite  
Decks 5-6
- Owner's Suite  
Deck 6

CATEGORY	DOUBLE OCCUPANCY <i>per person</i>	SINGLE OCCUPANCY <i>per person</i>
Superior Stateroom - Deck 3	\$14,260	\$24,155
Deluxe Stateroom - Deck 3	\$14,871	\$20,185
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 4	\$16,230	\$22,225
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 5	\$16,800	\$23,075
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 6	\$17,500	\$24,125
Deluxe Suite - Deck 6	\$22,580	\$31,745
Prestige Suite - Deck 5	\$28,930	\$41,275
Prestige Suite - Deck 6	\$30,190	\$43,165
Owner's Suite - Deck 6	\$37,220	\$70,075

**Departure: Secrets of Japan: Sacred Lands and World Heritage**  
**May 8–17, 2027 | Deposit: 25% of Tour Fare**

You will be allocated a cabin within The Great Courses Journey's allotment, specific cabin requests based on availability.

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