

JAPAN'S NATIONAL PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE

on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER

31 May - 15 June 2026



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Day 1

Sunday 31st May 2026

Osaka

Our 16-day circumnavigation of Honshu for Japan's National Parks, Art & Culture expedition began in the vibrant city of Osaka. There could hardly have been a more fitting starting point for the journey ahead – a city where nature, culture and creativity intersect.

We gathered at the Hilton Osaka, conveniently located in the heart of the city, directly opposite Osaka Station. As fellow travellers arrived throughout the afternoon, introductions were made and excitement for the voyage steadily built.

That evening, we came together for a welcome dinner featuring a selection of

Japanese specialities. It was a relaxed opportunity to reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, and share in the anticipation of the adventure that lay ahead.

Day 2

Monday 1st June 2026

Osaka/Kyoto and departure

At breakfast, we had the opportunity to reconnect with those we had met the previous evening and get to know some of our fellow adventurers before setting off on our pre-selected activities in Osaka.

One group travelled to Minoh National Park, one of Japan's smallest National Parks, to visit the spectacular 33-metre-high Minoh Waterfall. The walk to the falls followed a forested trail through lush woodland inhabited by Japanese Macaques and a variety of bird species. After working up an appetite, we enjoyed a well-earned lunch at a central Osaka restaurant, where a wide selection of Japanese specialities were served on individually presented plates and bowls.

The afternoon continued with a visit to the impressive eight-storey Osaka Castle. As we approached, we were struck by the enormous dry-wall stones surrounding the moat and the beautifully maintained castle gardens. Inside, exhibits on each floor traced the region's samurai history, while some guests climbed to the top for sweeping views across the city.

Meanwhile, those in the second group journeyed to Kyoto, Japan's former imperial capital. Travelling through residential neighbourhoods and rice paddies, we arrived at the remarkable Sanjūsangen-dō Temple, home to the famed Hall of a Thousand Statues and designated a National Treasure of Japan. Dating from the late Heian period, the temple houses 28 Guardian Deities and 1,001 life-sized statues of the Thousand-Armed Kannon, arranged on either side of a much larger central figure of the bodhisattva. The subdued lighting, fragrant incense, and tranquil atmosphere created a profound sense of reverence.

A midday stroll along the narrow, lantern-filled lanes of 16th Century Pontochō Alley introduced us to Kyoto's traditional wooden Machiya townhouses, restaurants and shops. From there, we continued to the bustling Nishiki Market, often referred to as 'Kyoto's Kitchen'. Exploring its vibrant network of stalls and speciality stores, we sampled a variety of local delicacies for lunch, including grilled scallop skewers, sweet potato chips, sashimi, and mochi, while soaking up the colourful atmosphere.

Our final stop was the Kizakura Sake Brewery and Museum. After learning about the traditions and techniques of sake production through an informative presentation, we had the opportunity to taste the results ourselves, raising a glass together with a cheerful “Kanpai”.

By late afternoon, both groups had arrived at the port, beneath the towering Ferris wheel, to board our beautiful new home for the adventure ahead, *Heritage Adventurer*. After settling in and exploring our expedition vessel, we gathered for the mandatory lifeboat drill. No sooner had it concluded than we were treated to a farewell performance of traditional taiko drumming as we departed for the Pacific Ocean.

Later, we assembled in the observation lounge for our introductory briefings. Hotel Director Roman and Cruise Manager Jacqui welcomed us aboard and introduced life on *Heritage Adventurer*, while Expedition Leader Aaron introduced the expedition team and our local Japanese guides – the experts who would help us make the most out of our time exploring Japan.

Naturally, much of the discussion centred on the approach of Typhoon Jangmi. The storm had been moving north from tropical waters and was already affecting Okinawa and southern Japan as we boarded. Aaron presented maps showing both its current position and projected track, along with forecasts for strong winds and heavy seas. Fortunately, the timing of the storm gave us the flexibility to adjust our route and continue our voyage comfortably ahead of the system.

To ensure the best possible experience while maintaining safe and favourable sailing conditions, a few itinerary changes were made. Our visit to Ise-Shima would be shortened to a half-day ashore, and Oshima Island would be replaced as we sailed directly to the sheltered port of Ishinomaki. These adjustments allowed us to stay well clear of the weather while continuing to enjoy our exploration of Japan’s remarkable coastline.

Following these briefings, we enjoyed our first opportunity to sample the excellent cuisine prepared by the galley and dining room teams. It was a delicious start to what promised to be an unforgettable voyage.



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Day 3

Tuesday 2nd June 2026

Ise Shima

Our first day of excursions provided an exciting start to the expedition. A Zodiac shuttle was required to reach the wharf, adding an extra sense of adventure to the day. While swell alongside the gangway presented some challenges early on, the expertise of the Captain, the skill of the Zodiac drivers, and the teamwork of the deck crew ensured a smooth and successful operation. With a touch of expedition spirit from everyone on board, we were soon on our way ashore. Light to moderate rain accompanied us throughout the day, lending a distinctly atmospheric backdrop to our explorations.

Once ashore, we travelled north through the rugged landscapes of Ise-Shima National Park. The drive took us through a network of hills, tunnels, and bridges before arriving at the sacred forests surrounding Ise Grand-Shrine (Naikū). Walking through the beautifully maintained grounds and into the ancient Sugi (Japanese Cedar) forest, we soon reached one of Japan's most revered spiritual sites.

Dedicated to the sun goddess, Amaterasu, Naikū has stood here for more than

2,000 years and is considered the holiest shrine in Shinto. We shared the experience with Japanese pilgrims who were visiting this deeply significant place. One of the shrine's most remarkable traditions is its complete dismantling and reconstruction every 20 years, a practice that preserves both craftsmanship and spiritual purity. We were able to view the site reserved for the next rebuilding, scheduled for 2033.

Afterwards, we enjoyed some free time in Okage Yokocho, a charming district that recreates the atmosphere of the Edo period. The traditional streets offered opportunities to sample local snacks, browse artisan shops, and pick up souvenirs before returning to *Heritage Adventurer* for lunch.

This afternoon marked the beginning of our onboard education programme. John R. opened the series with an engaging 'Overview of Japanese History', followed by Jonathan's introduction to 'The Birds of Japan'. Aaron then provided an update on our plans to stay ahead of Typhoon Jangmi and avoid the worst of the forecast conditions.

Later, we gathered for the Captain's Welcome Cocktails, where Captain Sergei introduced the heads of the ship's departments and officially welcomed us aboard. The evening concluded with the Captain's Welcome Dinner, featuring a special menu prepared by the galley's team. All in all, it was an active and rewarding start to the voyage. Combined with the gentle motion of the ocean, the day's adventures ensured a restful night's sleep for most of us.



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Day 4

Wednesday 3rd June 2026

At Sea

After a welcome sleep-in, we awoke to dramatic weather outside, with strong winds and lively seas exactly as forecast. Overnight, *Heritage Adventurer* had made excellent progress, comfortably staying ahead of Typhoon Jangmi and ensuring we remained in favourable conditions throughout our voyage. With our planned shore excursion replaced by a relaxing day at sea, we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast before gathering in the lounge for the continuation of the onboard education programme. It was a welcome opportunity to settle in, enjoy the comforts of the ship, and spend more time learning from the Expedition Team while watching the ever-changing seascape beyond the windows.

Hamish began the day with 'When Four Plates Meet', an exploration of the immense geological forces that have shaped the Japanese archipelago. Lou followed with 'A New Way of Thinking', explaining how Japan has developed its unique approach to national parks and protected areas by incorporating local communities into their management and conservation.

Those not immersed in learning could often be found on the outer decks, clad in waterproof gear and braving the elements in search of seabirds. The conditions provided excellent opportunities for birdwatching, while lunch offered a welcome chance for everyone to warm up and recharge.

Throughout the afternoon, our expedition vessel continued steadily along its planned course through moderate seas, strong winds, and persistent rain. Matt C. and Tina prepared us for future exploration with talks on an 'Introduction to Photography' and 'The Essence of Japanese Gardens'. Between lectures, many guests relaxed in the lounges or the comfort of their rooms, watching the dramatic seascape unfold beyond the windows as the storm continued to sweep across the region.

As the recap and briefing began, we passed through the breakwater and entered the sheltered port of Ishinomaki, ensuring a calm and secure berth while the storm tracked to the north and east. During the evening update, Lou outlined the impact Typhoon Jangmi was having on Tokyo and the Ise-Shima region, where heavy rain and widespread disruptions to rail and air services were being reported. These

reports served as a timely reminder of how fortunate we had been to stay comfortable ahead of the storm throughout our voyage. The successful execution of our revised itinerary prompted heartfelt appreciation for Expedition Leader Aaron and Captain Sergei, whose careful planning and decision-making had ensured that we remained safe, comfortable, and able to continue enjoying the expedition with minimal disruption.

Although we remained aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, it was no great hardship. The calm, sheltered harbour provided a welcome contrast to the previous day's wind and waves creating the perfect setting for a restful night and an opportunity to recharge before the adventures that awaited us the following day.



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Day 5

Thursday 4th June 2026

Ishinomaki

We enjoyed a relaxed start to the morning as port authorities worked through the logistics associated with our early arrival. Once clearance was granted, we made our way ashore, pausing to sample some local tomato juice before boarding the coaches. Although a fresh breeze lingered, the rain had cleared and conditions steadily improved throughout the morning. Before long, the clouds began to break apart, revealing blue sky and welcome sunshine as we set off to explore.

Those on Option One travelled to Matsushima Bay, celebrated as one of 'Japan's Three Great Views'. After some free time to explore, we gathered at the boat terminal and boarded a double-decker sightseeing vessel for a one-hour cruise among the bay's more than 260 islands. Each island possesses its own distinctive shape and character, many bearing names inspired by their appearance or the poetry they have inspired over the centuries.

Along the shoreline stands several temples dating from the Edo period, the most impressive being Zuiganji, a Zen Buddhist Temple completed in 1609 under the

patronage of the powerful Daimyo (feudal Lord) Date Masamune, known as the 'One-Eyed-Dragon'. Inside, magnificent murals depicting Falcons, Peacocks, and seasonal landscapes decorate the rooms, painted on gold leaf by master artists of the period. Designated a National Treasure of Japan, the temple overlooks beautifully maintained gardens featuring expansive raked sand displays.

The excursion concluded with a nature walk across the iconic red Fukuura Bridge to Fukuura-jima Island. Trails wound through forests of Cherry Trees, Maples, Camellias, and Cedars, providing opportunities to enjoy both the scenery and a variety of birdlife.

Meanwhile, guests on Option Two began at the striking Ishinomori Manga Museum. Perched on the banks of the Kyukitakami River, the futuristic disc-shaped building was opened in 2001 to celebrate the work of renowned manga artist Shotaro Ishinomori, creator of Kamen Rider and Cyborg 009. While it seemed an unusual starting point for the day, our guide, Yori, explained that creativity and imagination remain central to the identity of Ishinomaki, even in the aftermath of the tragedy that would shape much of the city's recent history.

To provide context, Yori described Ishinomaki before the disaster as a vibrant and thriving city, with strong neighbourhoods, schools, businesses, and a close-knit community. We learned how, at 2:46pm (JST) on 11 March 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, generating powerful and prolonged shaking before sending a devastating tsunami towards the coast. Reaching heights of between six and more than 15 metres, the tsunami surged up to five kilometres inland, destroying entire neighbourhoods, devastating infrastructure, and claiming many lives.

At the 38-hectare Ishinomaki Tsunami Memorial Park, we reflected on the events of that day. Walking through the spacious and peaceful grounds, many of us recalled where we were when we first heard the news and paused to remember those affected by the disaster.

Further along the coast, we visited the former Kadonowaki Elementary School, where the remains of buildings damaged by both the tsunami and the fires that followed have been preserved as a memorial. Thanks to regular evacuation training, students and teachers fled to nearby Mount Hiyori, saving many lives. The museum's exhibit provided a sobering amount of both the geophysical processes behind the disaster and the human stories that emerged from it.

Both groups headed back to *Heritage Adventurer* for a late lunch. As we cast off and headed back to sea, a large crowd of local well-wishers gathered on the wharf, waving enthusiastically as we departed.

The afternoon programme began with Yoshimi-san, who took to the stage dressed in a beautiful kimono. Her presentation explored the history, philosophy, and traditions of the Japanese Tea Ceremony, offering insights into one of the country's most enduring cultural practices.

As we left the shelter of the bay and resumed our northbound course, the ocean swell generated by Typhoon Jangmi became more noticeable. The gentle motion of our expedition vessel served as a timely reminder of the seafarer's rule of keeping 'one hand for the ship' while moving about on board. For some, the rolling seas provided the perfect opportunity for a relaxing afternoon recharge, while others took advantage of the conditions to spend time watching the ever-changing ocean. The birders, meanwhile, were undeterred, gathering on deck to enjoy sightings of albatross.

Later, New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate John Reynolds presented 'Great Wave', a personal exploration of contemporary art practice and its influences, providing a thought-provoking introduction to themes we would encounter throughout the voyage.

The sea state continued to build gradually throughout the evening and into the night. While there was increased motion of *Heritage Adventurer*, it did little to dampen spirits or deter attendance at dinner. For many, the lively conditions were all part of the adventure, though they did inspire some creative approaches to a good night's sleep. A few of us even opted to sleep crosswise on our beds.



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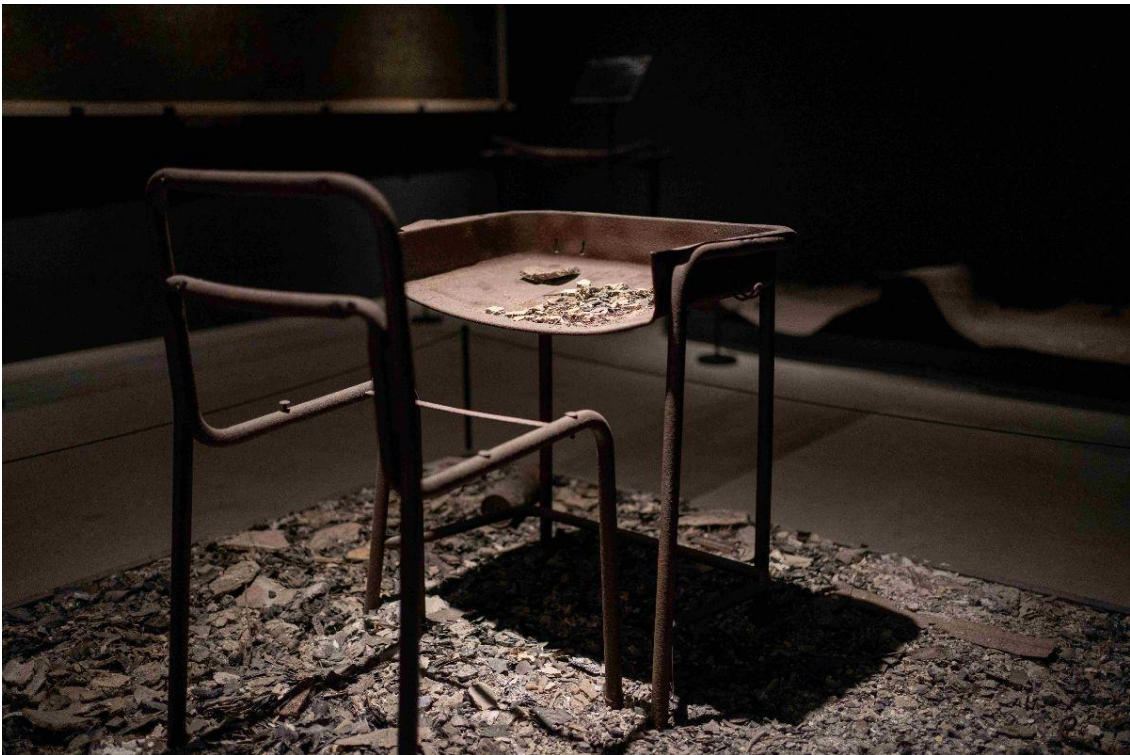
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Day 6

Friday 5th June 2026

Hachinohe

As the storm moved east, its anti-clockwise circulation brought northerly winds to Hachinohe, making conditions noticeably cooler on our arrival. A light jacket was welcome when heading ashore to explore.

Those on Option One departed first, travelling through a landscape of newly planted rice paddies to reach Tsutanuma Lake in the heart of Towada-Hachimantai National Park. Although the rain continued fairly steadily, we still enjoyed walks of various lengths as we made a circuit through the wetland area, taking in its many ponds and lush, verdant vegetation. While conditions were not ideal for birdwatching, the group was rewarded with a good range of sightings, including the beautiful Mandarin Duck.

Our lunch stop was at a local restaurant at Lake Towada, where we were served a simmering plate of pork and onions with side dishes of pickled vegetables, salad, rice, and honey-glazed local Trout, complemented by our choice of beer, sake, apple juice, or soft drinks.

Our other visit was to the spectacular Oirase Gorge, where guests could choose between longer and shorter walks along the Oirase Stream. Its walls supported impressive waterfalls, while the river valley was covered in greenery of all sorts, with numerous cascades and rapids flowing among logs and boulders on all sides. At the end of the trail, many of us stopped for ice cream and drinks. Some even bought bear bells before boarding the coaches and returning to *Heritage Adventurer*.

Guests on Option Two also drove out through the industrial city into the countryside for a stop at Nejo Castle, where we learned that horses have played an important part in the history of this region. This reconstruction of the stronghold of a 14th Century Daimyo stands on its original site among moats and bridges. The main house was set out with props and mannequins to recreate the lifestyle of the time. The stables have been repurposed as an art studio, giving us the opportunity to decorate our own toy horse statues.

From there, we visited the large and airy Hachinohe Art Museum to see some of its experimental works, before returning to our expedition vessel for lunch. The Towada Art Center was closed for the day, but the trip proved worthwhile, offering

glimpses of the galleries through the windows and, in particular, the opportunity to explore the many sculptures displayed along the avenue. The iconic Polka Dot Pumpkin and other works by Yayoi Kusama were especially popular.

Then it was back to port and out to sea. The sea continued with the by now familiar three-to-four metre swell as we eased into our evening of recap/briefing/dinner before bed.



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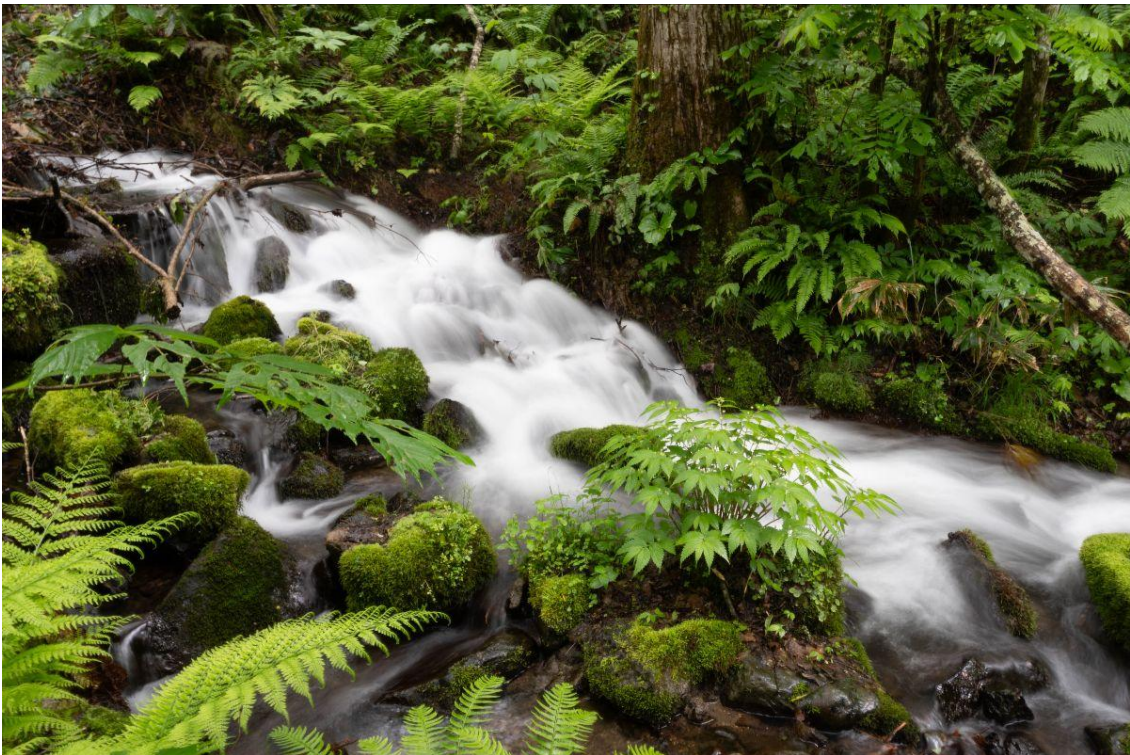
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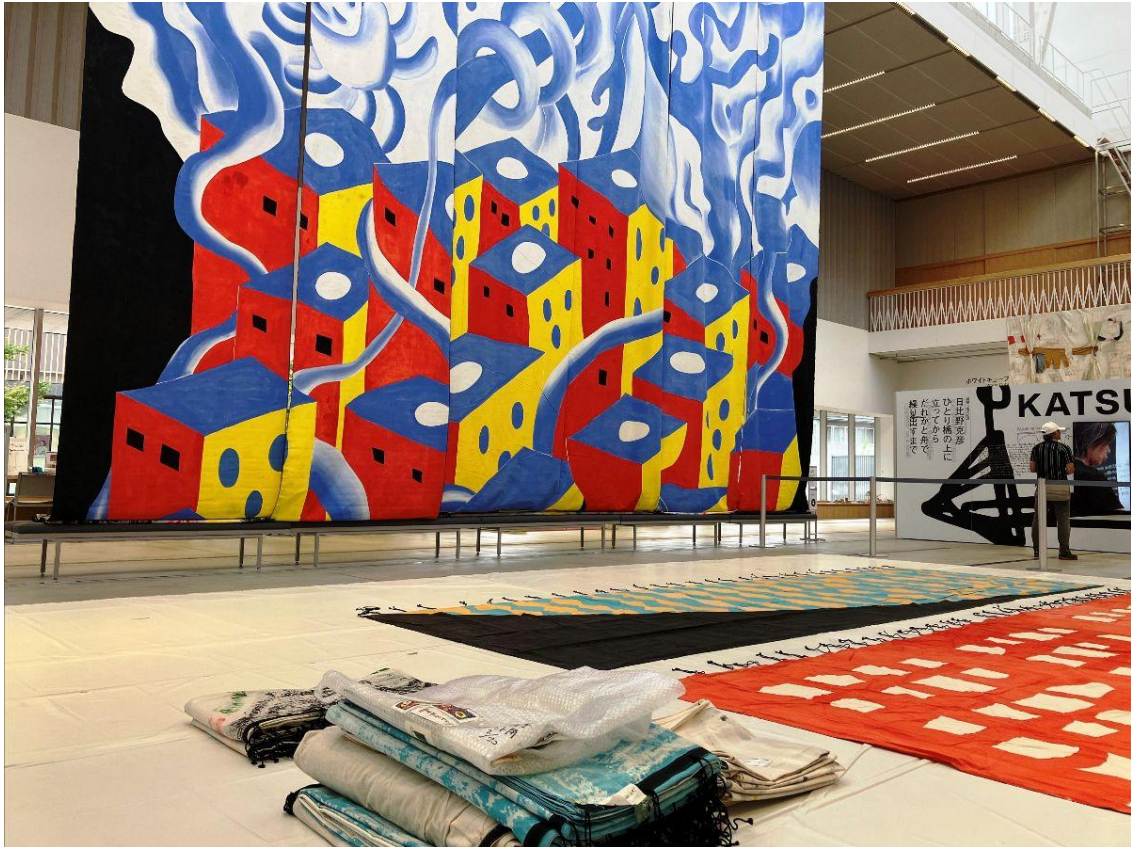
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Day 7

Saturday 6th June 2026

Muroran

Typhoon Jangmi was not done with us yet, and we once again rode the swell overnight, waking to wet and windy conditions that persisted throughout the day. Undeterred, we rugged up and set out in true expeditionary spirit.

Those on Option One headed for Lake Toya for a view of the large and deep lake within the volcanic caldera. We stopped for a short walk along the foreshore to visit a sculpture garden set in the Toya-Usu Geopark, experiencing first-hand Japan's unique blending of art and nature. The ride up Mount Usu on the ropeway was fun, but the views from the top were limited. We then returned to our expedition vessel for lunch.

Guests on Option Two also crossed the Swan Bridge to reach the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park. The impressive complex was established to educate visitors about the rich culture, and difficult history of the Ainu people, the

Indigenous inhabitants and original people of Hokkaido, northern Honshu and Sakhalin Island. One highlight was the beautiful theatre where we experienced a moving multi-media cultural performance. The museum complex was a treasure trove of information, and the park-like grounds held replicas of their traditional houses.

Our restaurant for lunch served up a traditional Japanese meal of sukiyaki – a hotpot of broth with salmon, mushrooms and cabbage, rice and salmon cooked two ways plus a local craft beer.

After lunch, we split into two groups. One option was to head to Noboribetsu Onsen to experience a Japanese bathhouse and relax in the mineral-rich waters, which are said to have healing properties. The others joined the Option One group for a walk in Hell Valley, a bubbling landscape of steam vents, hot springs, and sulphurous streams. The rain persisted, but the trails were well signposted as we explored the source of those healing waters. Some even enjoyed a little souvenir shopping.

Eventually, we left this wonderful valley and surrounds to cast off and once again set course for our next destination. With a free afternoon at sea, the birders headed for the outer decks while the rest of us caught up on photo sorting, log writing, and swapping experiences in the lounge.

As we made the transit of the Tsugaru Strait between Hokkaido and Honshu, we finally escaped the clutches of Jangmi and entered calmer waters. While Hachinohe and Muroran had held many delightful surprises, we were pleased to hear the forecast for warm, dry weather ahead.



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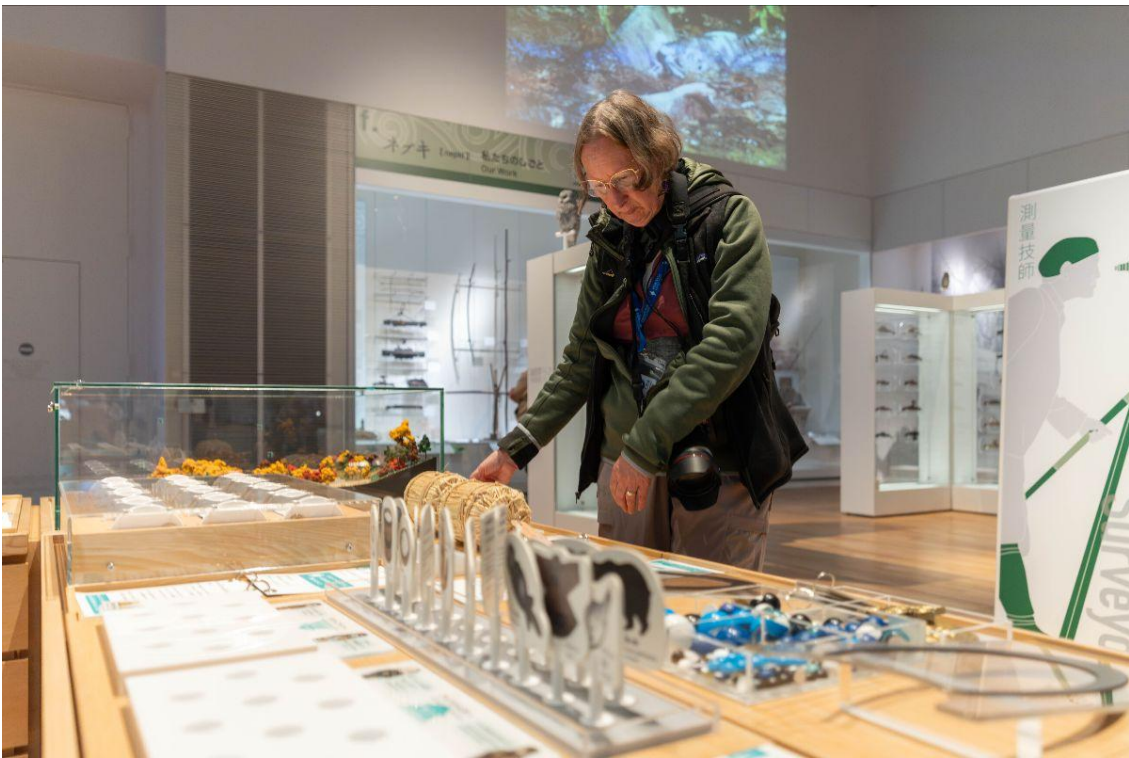
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Day 8

Sunday 7th June 2026

Akita

It was an absolute delight to sail into the port of Akita in sunshine and summertime temperatures. Yippee! It was also an absolute delight to be welcomed by a taiko drumming group composed of four powerful and skilful women. They filled our morning with rhythm and energy.

Guests on Option One left *Heritage Adventurer* and headed for Dakigaeri Gorge, and after driving past multitudes of rice paddies and fertile farmland, we reached the Cedar-clad mountains and iridescent green forests. The final stretch of the journey was a climb up the valley past ski resorts before we dropped by Mount Iwate volcano.

On arrival at the gorge, we had the choice to either self-explore or accompany a guide. Either way, we had almost two hours following the aqua-blue Tama River. It was a quiet, serene atmosphere, and many felt it was an unexpected highlight of the voyage. A variety of birds and insects were identified by our guides as we passed waterfalls and pools that seemed to get bluer and bluer the further we went.

In the Samurai District of Kakunodate, Hamish gave us a detailed explanation of the geology we had witnessed. Lunch was in a restaurant housed in a historic building that also doubled as a museum. There, we enjoyed a local cuisine called Shottsuru Nabe with sticky rice and an interesting smoked pickle radish.

We were then free to walk through the tree-lined streets of the Samurai District and merchant area, where we gave our credit cards a good workout. After a wonderfully peaceful day in the forest and historic town, it was a restful drive back to the port at Akita.

Guests on Option Two started the day with a short drive to Senshū Park, formerly the grounds of Kubota Castle. The park was designed by the noted landscape architect Shusei Nagaoka during the Meiji Period. His work transformed the old castle grounds into a lovely multi-layered landscape to explore. There were monuments, shrines, restored castle features, and more.

Best of all was the local festival being held on a Sunday morning. There were stalls with toys, snacks, crafts, and even a local steel band. It was such fun to spend this relaxed yet lively time with the locals. From there, it was only a short distance to the Akita Art Museum, where the building, designed by Tadao Ando, displayed works by Tsuguharu Foujita alongside a touring special exhibition of European masters.

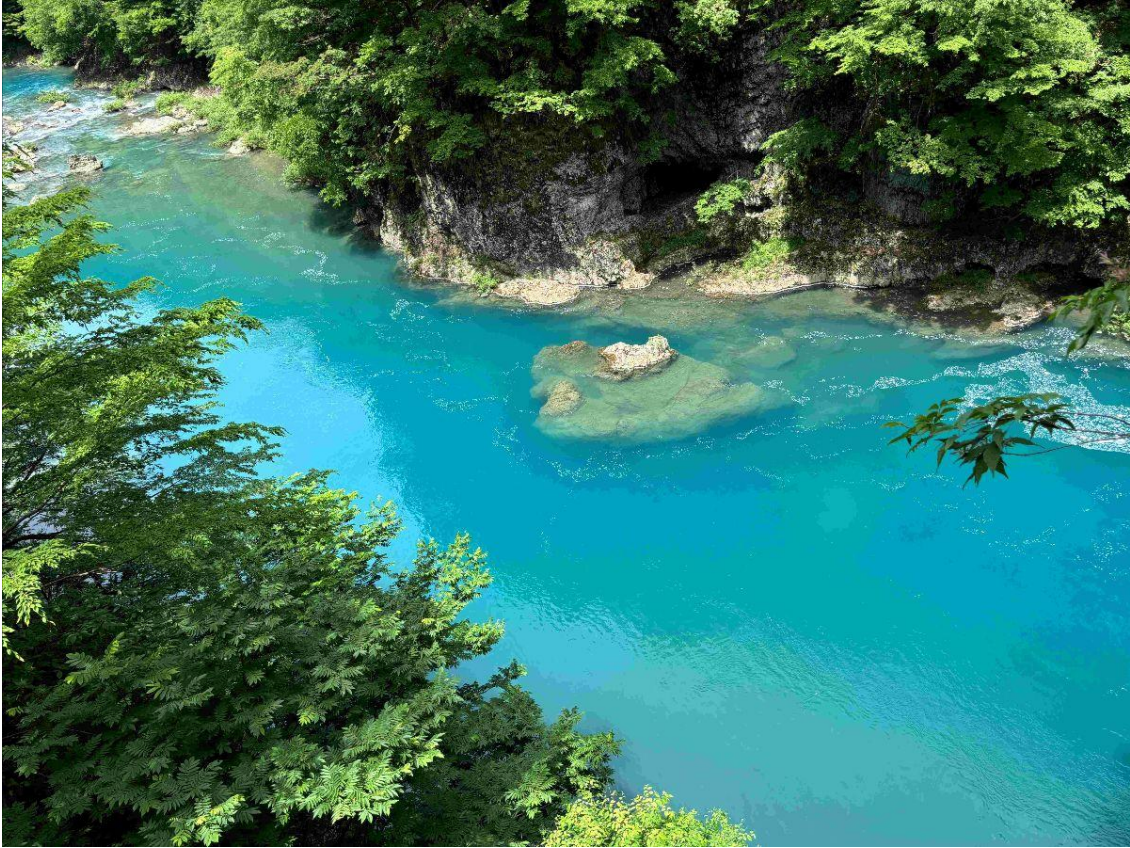
The after-lunch excursion took us along the coast and into the heavily wooded mountains to the Namahage Museum. There, we saw the many styles of Namahage costumes and learned about the traditions surrounding them. The video presentation of Namahage visits was entertaining, as we watched children having the living daylights scared out of them when the ogres entered their homes to check on their behaviour.

We then visited a traditional thatched-roof Japanese house for a re-enactment of the New Year's Eve visit of the Namahage, who search for lazy children or wives.

The re-enactment was both fun and a little scary. The Namahage were loud and boisterous before sitting down to question the father about all the bad behaviours of his family over the previous 12 months. Our farewell after an exceptional day in Akita was a dance performance featuring local costumes and music. We made the most of dinner, knowing our overnight passage would be through gentle seas.



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Day 9

Monday 8th June 2026

Sado Island

Sado Island welcomed us with overcast skies and the occasional light shower. Fortunately, the cloudier weather was accompanied by warmer temperatures, making for great conditions for exploring. Everyone visited the world-famous Kodo taiko drummers and enjoyed a ride in the Tarai-bune, a tub boat paddled by one person using a single paddle.

At the Sado Island Taiko Centre (Tatakokan), constructed from local timber, we took turns playing the taiko drums, following the beat of the leader. The reverberations echoed through both mind and body, and the fun was contagious. We also saw and played two drums hand-carved from a 600-year-old Japanese Zelkova Tree. The visit finished with a performance that demonstrated the skill and passion of our teachers.

The tub boats are fitted with a glass-bottom box, allowing us to peer through the

crystal-clear water in search of shellfish and seaweed. We made a circuit of the local inlet, taking turns being paddled and trying our hand at paddling ourselves. It certainly looked easier than it was!

Some called into the Ogi Museum, housed in a former elementary school dating from the early 1900s. The museum exhibits a magnificent collection of more than 30,000 folk artefacts, including fishing and shipbuilding tools from Southern Sado, as well as objects closely related to the everyday lives of ordinary people. Taken together, they evoke the retro ambience of the Shōwa era (1926-1989). The ship on display was restored from the design drawings of a Sengokubune (wooden freight ship), originally built in 1858 in Shukunegi.

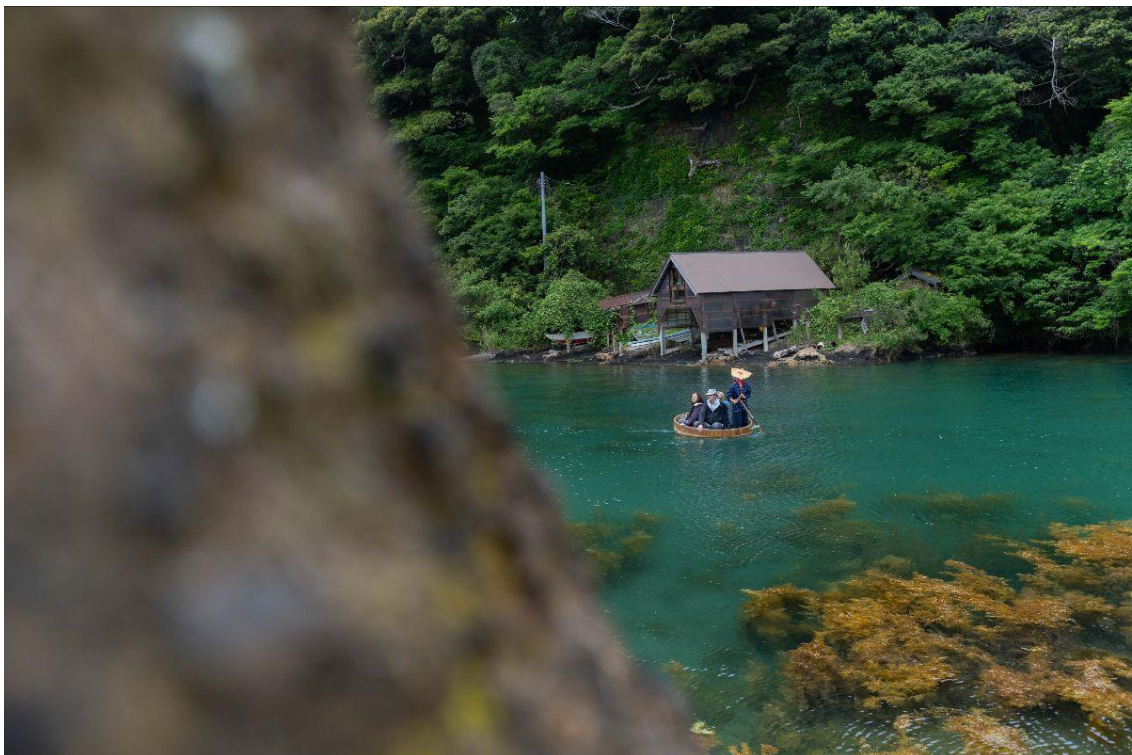
From the small bay at Shukunegi, we made our way along the coastline, following the water's edge over rough volcanic rocks that resembled a moonscape descending into the ocean. Gradually, we made our way to Kotoura and then back to *Heritage Adventurer* for lunch.

The rest headed into the mountains to try their hand at gold panning at Gold Park. It is safe to say that our gold dust finds were nothing compared to the 78 tonnes of gold extracted during the 400 years the mine was in operation.

An addition to the programme saw the Birders set out in search of the rare and beautiful Crested Ibis. The coach was kept at a respectful distance to avoid disturbing the birds and their fledglings, and everyone managed to enjoy sightings. The experience proved to be a real highlight of the day, sparking an enthusiastic recap afterwards and plenty of lively conversation over dinner.



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Day 10

Tuesday 9th June 2026

Kanazawa

It initially seemed that our unsettled weather might be continuing, with a heavy downpour as we made our way to the coaches. Fortunately, the shower soon cleared, and the rest of the day remained perfect for exploring.

There were three options today, so we spread out across many sites in the Kanazawa region.

Some started with a trip to the craft village of Yunokuni no Mori. This is a delightful spot where old houses from the surrounding area have been gathered together in a garden or park-like setting. Each of the houses offered a chance to try a different traditional handicraft. There was papermaking, glass sandblasting, lacquerware, silk dyeing, gold leaf work, and more. With the vouchers provided, we chose our house and set to work. The intensity of effort and the quality of the result were variable, but everyone was pleased with their own achievements and many souvenirs and gifts were created or purchased. We enjoyed a hot-pot lunch at a nearby restaurant with shellfish, salmon, chicken, vegetables, and an assortment of beverages.

Others started with a ride into the mountains to Shirakawa-go, where the sun was shining, the temperature was warm, and the scenery transitioned from bustling cityscapes to tranquil mountain landscapes. Upon arrival, the sight of Ogimachi Village, with its iconic Gassho-zukuri farmhouses, was captivating. As we were the first coach to arrive, we eagerly stepped out and began exploring the village. Each historic house seemed to whisper stories of the past. Inside the Kanda House, known for its impeccable preservation, we saw the traditional architecture. The steep thatched roof, spacious wooden interiors, and displays on silkworm farming and gunpowder production gave us a glimpse into the ingenuity and lifestyle of the village's former inhabitants.

The first stop for the rest was the central Omicho Market, where we had time to explore an incredible array of seafood and fresh produce — including some of the biggest oysters we had ever seen. As the market began to buzz with morning energy, we regrouped and set off for the Nagamachi Samurai District. There, we wandered through the elegant Nomura Samurai House, with its refined tatami-mat rooms and serene courtyard garden.

Some had lunch in the famed Kenroku-en Garden, and all of us made a stop at one of Japan's most celebrated strolling gardens. Dating back to the 17th Century, and consistently ranked among the nation's top three gardens, it combines six characteristics – spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, water sources, and magnificent views – embodying the ideal attributes of a traditional Japanese garden.

Other stops included Kanazawa's geisha district, Higashi Chaya. We strolled its atmospheric streets, lined with traditional teahouses — quiet reminders of a bygone era. The district's charm was undeniable, with artisan shops offering handcrafted goods and local delicacies. We had the chance to try our hand at making postcards using traditional gold leaf techniques or explore the local streets for curious ice cream flavours and hidden gems. After such a long and busy day, we enjoyed the chance to unwind and refuel in the evening.



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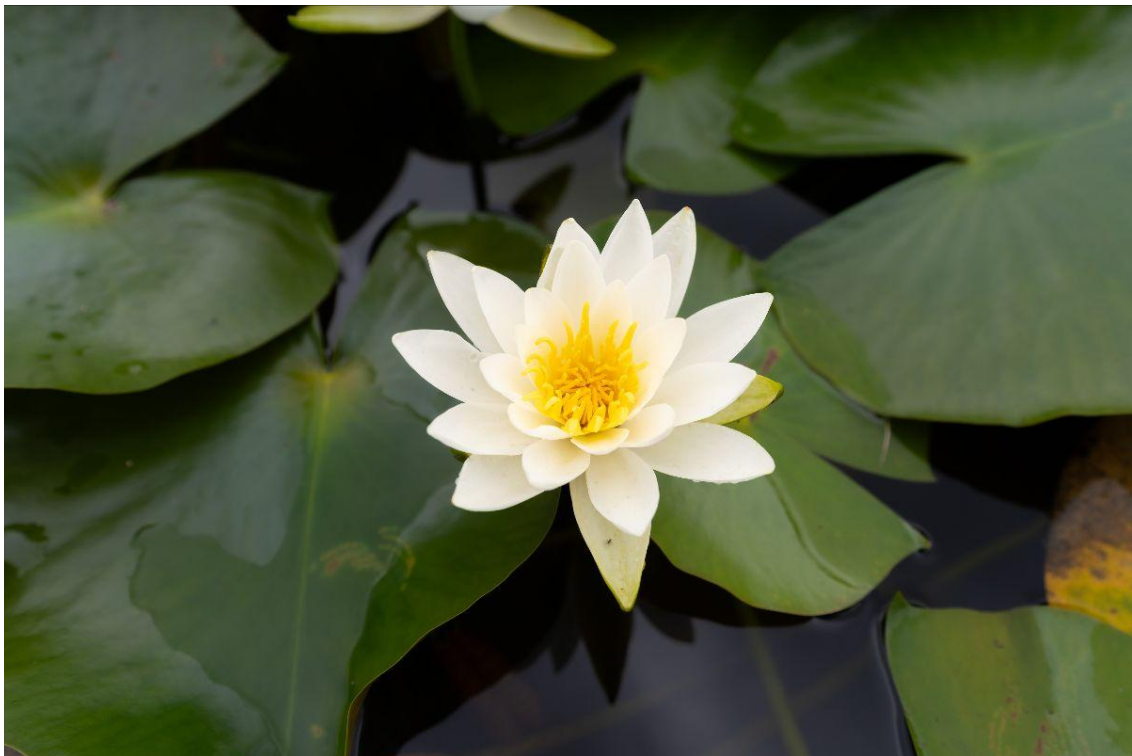
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Day 11

Wednesday 10th June 2026

Matsue

The brighter forecast for Matsue was welcomed as we arrived to sunshine, and warm temperatures and light winds made for comfortable conditions during our morning tours.

Most of us visited the Adachi Museum of Art. Opened in 1970, its most unique feature is its use of beautiful Japanese garden vistas framed by windows as living works of art. There is no strolling through these gardens, but they were vibrant in the height of the summer season. One floor above, the gallery showcased works by illustrious Japanese artists, particularly Yokoyama Taikan, a leading figure in the modern Japanese art world of the 20th Century. It was superb on both levels.

Others began the morning at Matsue Castle, climbing the stairs to reach the castle grounds. Once inside, excellent English-language signage explained the history, construction and preservation of one of Japan's 12 remaining original castles. The massive old posts and beams, along with the stone-dropping windows, told stories of days gone by.

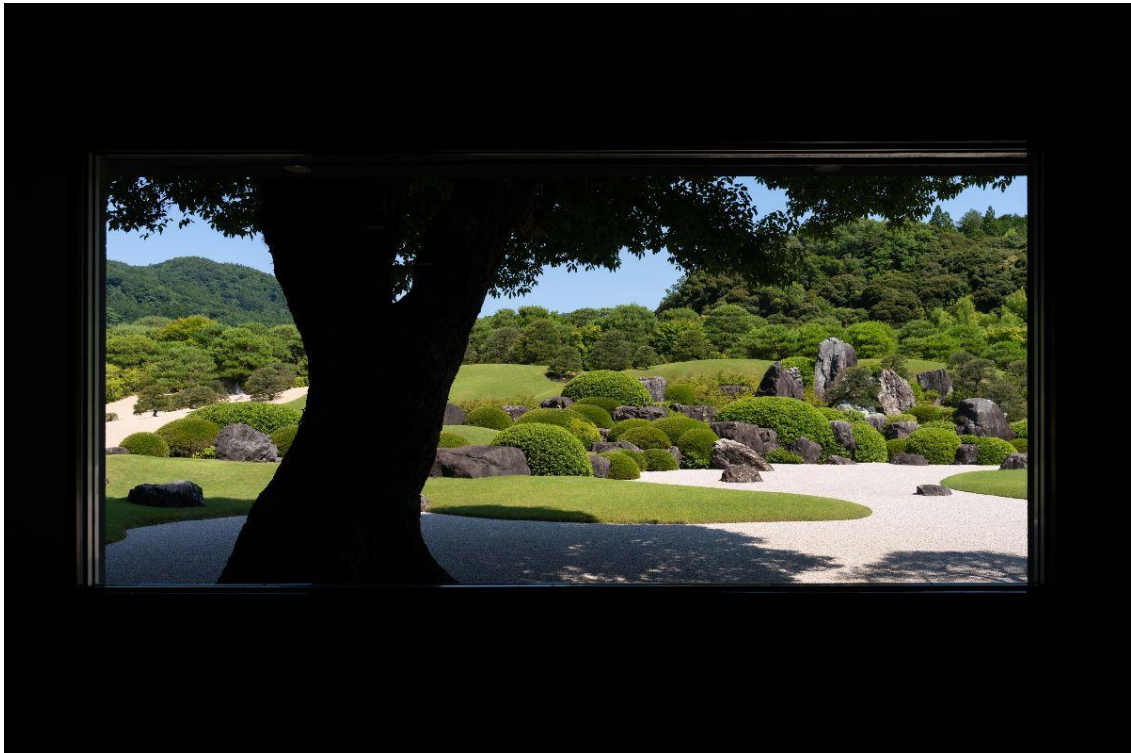
These groups rendezvoused at Yuushien Garden, where the visit began with a late-morning snack of excellent sushi. This compact garden felt like a highlights tour of Japanese garden design, with a pond surrounded by carefully trimmed pines, several bridges and stepping stones, a waterfall, and a sand garden enhanced with incense. Wherever the eye turned, there was a delightfully crafted vista.

The final group could see their destination, Mount Daisen, beckoning in the distance from *Heritage Adventurer*. It grew steadily larger as they drove across the city, through rural landscapes, and into the wooded foothills of the mountain. On arrival, they met local guides and followed winding paths through Beech Forest and impressive Japanese Cedars, passing shrines, temples and statues. Among them were many small figures wearing knitted red caps, honouring Jizō Bodhisattva, protector of the souls of children who died as infants. The forest also provided rewarding birdwatching opportunities.

This Buddhist monastery was once home to more than 3,000 soldier-monks. Everyone was able to visit the more than 1,000-year-old Daisenji Temple and

Ogamiyama Shrine at the top of the hill, where beautiful wooden architecture rewarded those who climbed the many stairs to reach them. And then it was back to our home away from home.

With some free time aboard, the education programme continued with John's introduction to 'The Japanese Language'. As we would be visiting Hiroshima in a few days' time, Yumiko-san introduced us to the story of Sadako Sasaki, a young victim of the atomic bombing who inspired the tradition of folding origami paper cranes as a symbol and offering of peace. We then tried our hand at making cranes in preparation for our own offering at the Children's Monument in the Peace Memorial Park. After an extravagant High Tea on the High Seas, Aaron filled in the backstory of his family and the company with a presentation titled 'Heritage Expeditions, The Story So Far'.



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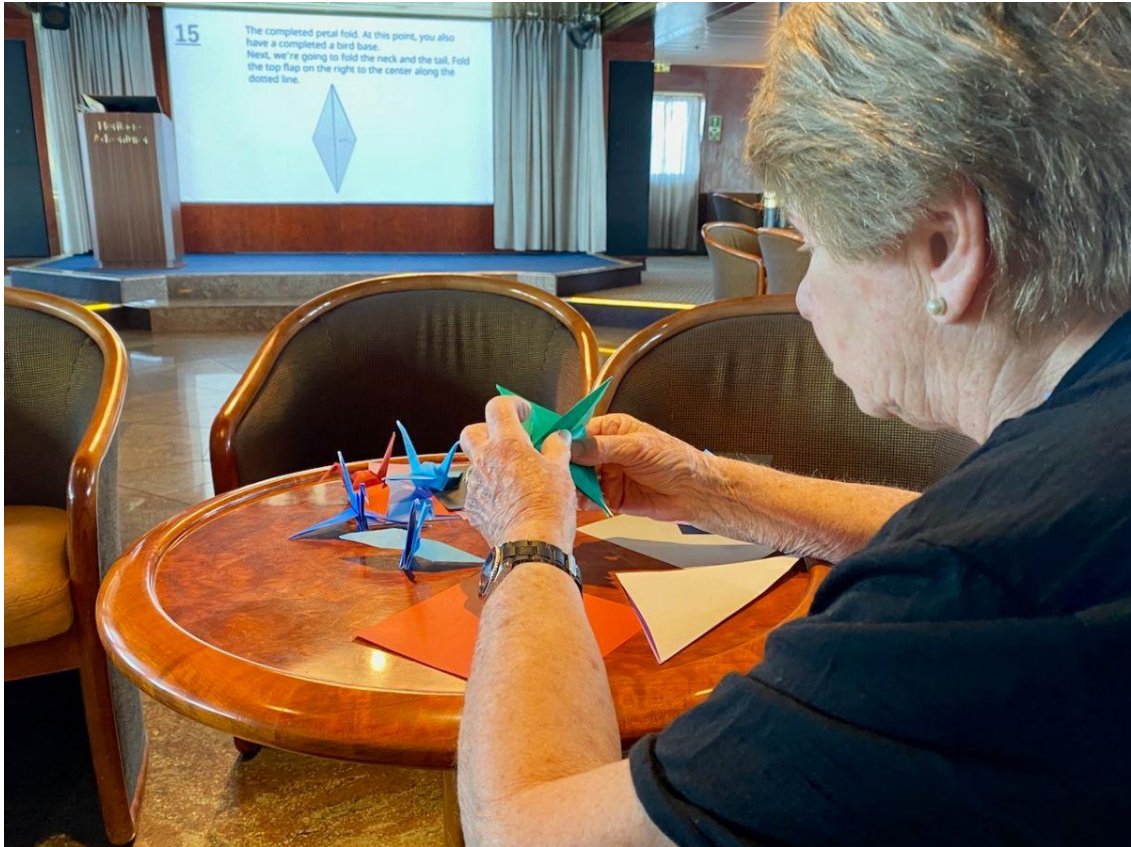
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Day 12

Thursday 11th June 2026

Ulsan, South Korea

The early risers were up to watch the activity as we entered the busy port of Ulsan, South Korea. Customs officials came aboard and completed the first of several steps required for us to be granted entry into the country. Once we had successfully completed the necessary checks, we headed out to explore on a sunny and very warm day.

We passed through the active heart of Ulsan, 'Hyundai City', and into the countryside. The Gyeongju group made their first stop at Tumuli Park, the site of the burial mounds of the Silla Kingdom, known as the Kingdom of the Heavenly Horse because of the artwork recovered from the tombs. The Silla Empire ruled this region and much of the Korean Peninsula for around a thousand years until approximately 1000 AD.

Hundreds of rulers were buried in large mounds, only a small number of which

have been excavated. We entered one that had been opened to view the golden treasures found within. From there, it was a short ride to the reconstructed Woljeonggyo Bridge, which also dates from that era. We then walked through a neighbouring historic village, including the restored house of a wealthy lord from the period. Lunch at a Korean restaurant featured many delicacies of meat, fish, vegetables, and kimchi, each served on separate small plates with a variety of sauces to choose from.

A short ride took us to the Bulguksa Temple, where we enjoyed the splendour of the beautiful grounds and temple buildings. Originally built in the 8th Century, but destroyed during the Japanese invasions of the 16th Century, the temple has been faithfully restored with detailed paintings and decorative motifs throughout. Paper Lotus blossoms and offering lanterns for Buddha's Birthday hung throughout the plazas, many bearing attached wishes and prayers. We approached to view the golden Buddha statues and pagodas, while some took the opportunity to stroke the golden pig for luck. After a full day, we had a bit of fun with karaoke and K-Pop videos on the well-equipped party buses.

The hiking group headed to Shinseonsan Mountain Trail, where we climbed 542 feet of stairs to a viewpoint overlooking Ulsan. From there, we could see thousands of apartments surrounding this beautiful parkland. It was obvious to all that this was a heavily used recreational area for residents of the surrounding suburbs.

We made our way down to one of the two lakes before splitting into two groups. Jonathan led the bird and insect enthusiasts, while Lou and Lindsay took the hardier walkers on a more strenuous route.

At a lovely restaurant closer to the port, we were treated to a wonderful Korean lunch consisting of seafood pancakes, a hot stone bowl of rice, egg, minced pork and vegetables, accompanied by the usual condiments of hot sauce and spicy kimchi.

We had all eagerly anticipated the after-lunch visit to the Hyundai car manufacturing plant. There, we were met by friendly employees who introduced us to the history and development of the world's largest car manufacturing complex, with Hyundai now ranking as the world's third-largest automobile manufacturer. An introductory video traced the company's beginnings in 1968 and its remarkable growth since then. This was followed by a fascinating tour of the vehicle assembly lines spread across the vast 15-hectare facility. We watched as newly completed cars rolled off the production line and were loaded directly onto ships bound for

North America.

As a bonus, we stopped at a shopping precinct to explore a large department store and a high-end supermarket, making a few purchases before returning to *Heritage Adventurer*. Our day trip to Korea gave us a taste of the country and an appreciation of how it differs from Japan.



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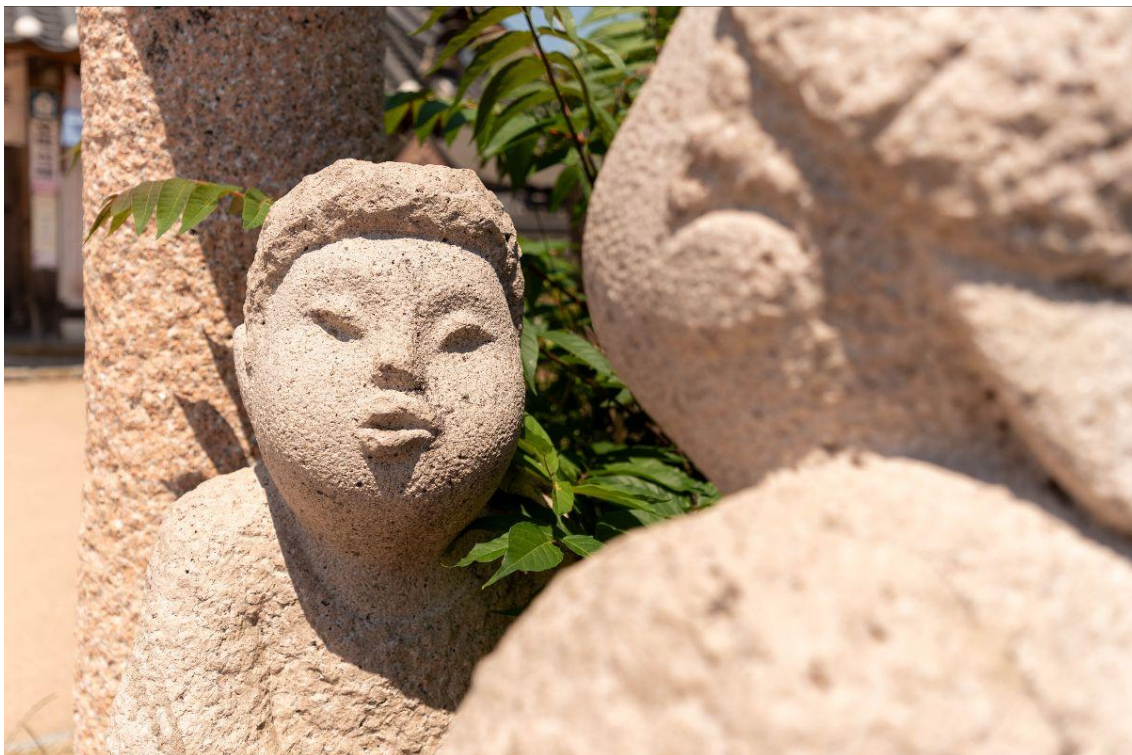
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Day 13

Friday 12th June 2026

Fukuoka, Japan

At Fukuoka, our first task was to complete the immigration and customs formalities required to re-enter Japan. We exited the cruise terminal into warm, sunny conditions and boarded the coaches for our selected options.

Those on the city option visited Nanzo-in Temple and Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine before lunch. As the entry ticket proudly states, Nanzo-in houses ‘the most biggest bronze statue of the reclining Buddha in the world’. The statue depicts the Buddha entering Nirvana. Dating from the late 1800s, it is surrounded by numerous smaller temples and statues. The atmosphere is intentionally subdued, with visitors encouraged to ‘Look deeply into your heart as you visit quietly’.

Daizaifu was a different story – especially for those who visited later in the day. The shrine is dedicated to a renowned scholar from the 10th Century who is honoured as Tenjin, the deity of scholarship and learning. As a result, the shrine itself, and

the shopping street leading to it, were thronged with student groups hoping to pray for success in their studies. Some seized the shopping opportunities – at least for ice cream.

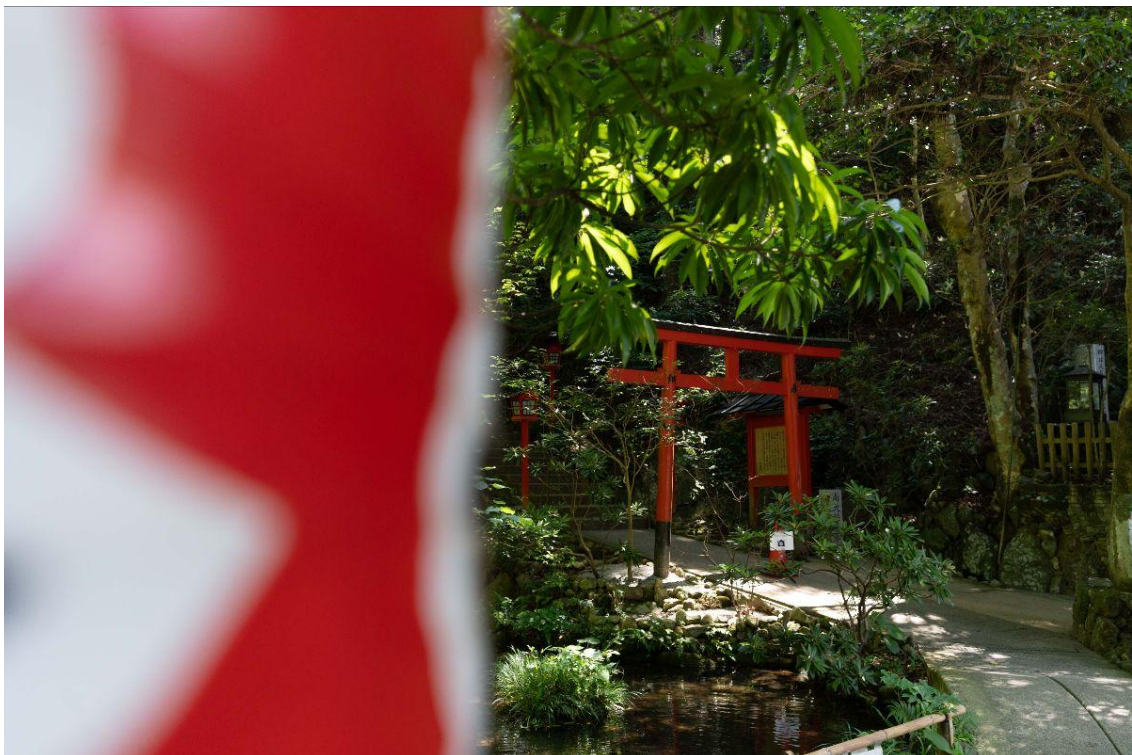
After lunch aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, this group visited the Fukuoka Art Museum to explore the collections inside and the sculpture garden outside. The group on the Mount Tachibana hike started with a stroll past a small rural village with some very old traditional houses, orchards, and locals tending their gardens. As we entered the lush forest, with its many large Camphor and Cedar trees, the air filled with birdsong and several Chinese Swallowtail Butterflies were spotted. The climb was steady, and after an hour we reached the 367-metre summit, where we were rewarded with spectacular views over the city and port. After a brief stop to admire the scenery, we descended the same route, pausing at a cosy café for a refreshing drink.

After a well-earned lunch on board, we headed out again to visit Yūsentei Park. This small strolling garden is centred around a Koi-filled pond and provides a stunning oasis in the centre of the city. It incorporates many traditional garden elements, while a splendid tatami-mat tea room overlooks the water. Several of us enjoyed a quiet moment partaking in Japanese green tea. It was a wonderfully relaxing way to end the excursion.

With a long transit ahead, we cast off in the early afternoon. This allowed for a continuation of the education programme, and Phil presented the ‘History of Tokugawa Ieyasu – The Man Who Changed Japan’. Dinner was moved forward slightly so that we would have a better opportunity to be out on deck as we transited the narrow and busy Kanmon Strait. Even after an exciting day, there was still enough energy left for a bit of dancing after dinner.



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Day 14

Saturday 13 June 2026

Hiroshima & Miyajima

Our run of good weather continued as Hiroshima turned on a glorious warm, sunny day. We spent the morning exploring the Peace Park and Museum. The museum provided a stark depiction of the horrors and suffering experienced by the victims of the nuclear bomb that exploded over the city on the morning of 6 August 1945. It was a sobering experience.

The Peace Park has been set aside to commemorate the bombing and its aftermath. The people of Hiroshima have made it their mission to ensure that the world does not forget the horrors of nuclear war. The Park contains the Cenotaph, the Eternal Flame, the Atomic Bomb Dome, and the Children's Memorial, where we chose representatives to present the paper cranes we had folded. Despite the sombre subject matter, the city's message of peace shone through.

Perhaps to help lift our spirits, the galley and dining room team served a barbecue

on the back deck as *Heritage Adventurer* relocated across the bay into position for our afternoon visit to Miyajima. We could not have chosen a better time, place, or conditions for our second Zodiac shuttle of the voyage. The ride in the warm sunshine across the sheltered waters of the Inland Sea was a fun way to reach 'Shrine Island'.

We made our way past the tame Sika Deer to Itsukushima Shrine, famous for its floating torii gate. As it was low tide, we were able to walk across the sand and through the gate itself. It was a spectacular way to appreciate just how large and rugged it is. In addition, walking the raised pathways through the sacred precinct gave us a sense of why this site was chosen back in the 12th Century.

In the 21st Century, there was also plenty of opportunity to explore the charming town and sample local delicacies, including Momiji Manju, a delightful maple-leaf-shaped cake, and coffee ice cream. Some ducked into the shops offering unique souvenirs and crafts. For a more peaceful alternative, we walked just up the hill, and found Daisho-in Temple and a hillside of small statues dedicated to Jizō Bodhisattva, protector of children who died too young to know the way to the afterlife.

It was truly a 'day of two halves', combining the heartache of the morning with the natural and cultural beauty of the afternoon. The evening added another element as Jacqui's disembarkation briefing reminded us how little time we have left to enjoy the company of our fellow adventurers.



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Day 15

Sunday 14th June 2026

Takamatsu

The skies were cloudy on the warm morning of our arrival in Takamatsu. With a full day ashore planned, we gathered everything we needed and headed to the coaches.

The Takamatsu group's first stop was the Ritsurin Garden. Beating the rush, we had plenty of time and space to explore this large and picturesque Edo-period garden. Like Kenroku-en in Kanazawa, it regularly ranks among Japan's top three strolling gardens.

The feudal lords who created this masterpiece ensured the design featured many gentle climbs, providing sweeping views over the lakes, streams, stone lanterns and rustic teahouses. Each of the more than 1,000 Pine Trees is meticulously trimmed to perfection, much like a bonsai. Some of us also chose to participate in a traditional tea ceremony at the teahouse by the lake.

A short drive brought us to Shikoku-mura, an open-air museum showcasing

traditional buildings from across Shikoku Island. Many began their visit by crossing the vine suspension bridge, then followed the walkways up and down the hillside to discover clusters of fascinating historic buildings. The displays offered an insight into village life on Shikoku, while the setting itself featured spectacular natural highlights, including a beautiful waterfall.

Lunch was served at a local restaurant and featured sashimi and side dishes to start, followed by tempura in an exceptionally delicate batter and a huge bowl of udon noodles, the local speciality. We had great fun trying to manage the long noodles in the small seasoning bowls. Most agreed it was the best lunch of the voyage.

We then visited the Kagawa Museum, where we admired the comprehensive history displays and artefacts spanning from the Jomon Period to the present day. Nearby was the site of Takamatsu Castle, now known as Tamamo Park. Built in 1590, it was one of the few Japanese Castles constructed along a waterfront. Although once a large and impressive castle during the Edo Period, today it consists of stone walls and reconstructed watchtowers surrounded by a moat. From there, it was only a short walk back to *Heritage Adventurer*.

The Naoshima group made the short walk to the adjacent ferry terminal and crossed to the island for a full day of art and architectural exploration. Their first stop was the Art House Project Area, where they split into smaller groups to explore the unique collection of contemporary art installations housed within traditional houses. Lunch was enjoyed at Naoshima Hall before continuing to the Benesse House Museum and Chichu Art Museum. Both were designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando and feature expansive spaces that beautifully showcase world-class collections of modern and contemporary art. A photo opportunity with Yayoi Kusama's iconic Yellow Pumpkin completed the visit before the group made its way to Miyanoura Port for the return ferry journey.

Our farewell performance was truly special. The Calligraphy Team from a Takamatsu high school danced as they painted a huge banner on the wharf before us. It was a treat to watch this uniquely Japanese art form take shape before our eyes, thanks to the skill, energy, and creativity of the team. Spectacular!

It was then time for the Captain's Farewell Cocktails, where we had the opportunity to thank the many crew members who helped make our Japan's National Parks, Art & Culture voyage so memorable. The evening also featured a special recap of the entire expedition – the slideshow, where Matt had somehow

managed to encapsulate the voyage in a series of images that highlighted just how much we had seen and experienced. It was a wonderful way to reflect on and share the memories of this remarkable adventure. We headed to dinner with those memories still fresh in our minds, laughing together and recounting the many special highlights of the journey.



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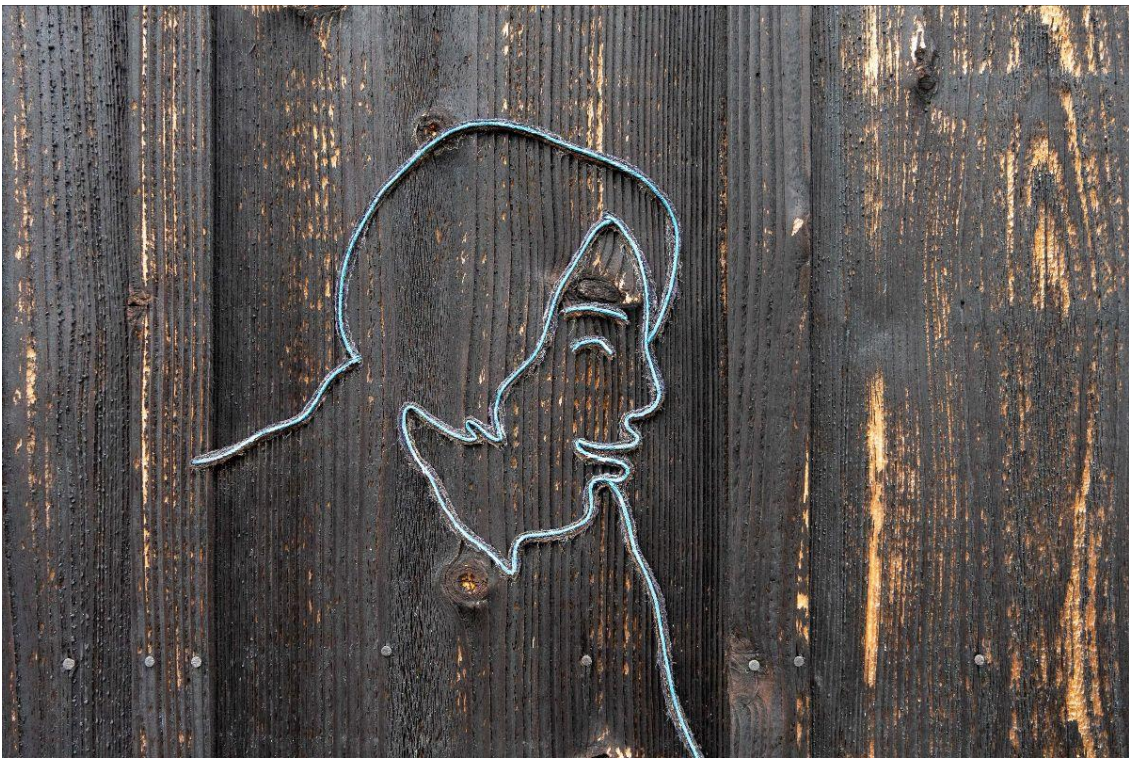
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Day 16

Monday 15th June 2026

Osaka and disembarkation

Our Japan's National Parks, Arts & Culture adventure came to an end as we placed our luggage outside our doors before gathering to enjoy one final breakfast together. We exchanged contact details with new friends and reflected on the many memorable experiences we had shared along the way. Soon it was time for a final walk down the gangway and one last thanks and farewell to the Expedition Team as we set off home to our different corners of the globe and on to new adventures. We did so knowing that this expedition, and our time together aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, will remain with us for a very long time. The memories, friendships, and experiences of this remarkable journey will undoubtedly stay with us for years to come.



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