

.....

Trains!

Trains are a part of travel in Japan, so let's try some unusual ones.



Genuine Thomas the Tank Engine steam train ride in Shizuoka - enjoy natural scenery from this specially themed train.

by **Jim Stephenson** on March 2016

Enjoy the many scenic variations of Japan from some interesting train rides.

Get to some great destinations by unusual transport types.

This itinerary adds the experience of a variety of un-common train rides to the already rich menu of cultural delights and experiences to be found in Japan.

ITINERARY OVERVIEW

CORE ITINERARY [OPTION 1]	7 NIGHTS
CORE + EXTENSION OPTION 1	10 NIGHTS
CORE + EXTENSION OPTION 2	10 NIGHTS
CORE + BOTH EXTENSIONS	14 NIGHTS

.....

Day 1

CORE ITINERARY

Tokyo



The Yamanote loop line runs both clockwise and counter-clockwise around Tokyo, linking all the major sub-centres.

Arriving in Tokyo the previous night, today is the first full day in Japan.

We visit some iconic destinations in Tokyo, using as many different modes of transport as possible:-

- Elevated unmanned guided transit for middle distance views of Tokyo
- Old-style streetcar, partly on separate right of way, partly on existing streets - see the finer detail of differing parts of Tokyo
- The most used standard rail line in Tokyo - Yamanote Line.
- Tokyo subway lines - breeze through the maze with our expert escort.

Possible destinations include:-

- Harajuku or Akihabara pop-culture district
 - Rikugien traditional Japanese Garden
 - Asakusa for traditional crafts, Sensoji Temple & Pagoda, Sumida River
 - High lookout at Skytree tower or Tokyo Metropolitan Govt. Building
-

Day 2-3

CORE ITINERARY

Tokyo > Hakone > Tokyo



This line-up of retro express trains is operated by the Odakyu Line, connecting Shinjuku in Tokyo with the mountain resort region of Hakone. More modern versions operate also, but with some planning you can ride one of these classics.

A visit to Hakone - after travelling in the Odakyu Romance Car (above), we change to a mountain climbing switchback train (the steepest without special tracks).

Stay at a hot-spring resort overnight - your chance to try Japanese style bathing in a thermal spring bath.

Other features include:-

- Open-air sculpture museum
- Cablecar and Ropeway rides with views of Mt Fuji¹
- Lake cruise, unique craft shops, museums and gardens



Lake Ashi, Mt Fuji - in the Hakone region.

¹ Weather permitting

Day 4

CORE ITINERARY

Tokyo > Enoshima > Kamakura



The shonan monorail is one of a few suspended types found in Japan.

A day excursion from Tokyo to the sea-side resorts of Enoshima and Kamakura, includes rides on:-

- a suspended monorail that passes over semi-rural residential areas, with views of Mt Fuji, and ends at the seaside resort of Enoshima which features a small offshore island loaded with various temples, food and craft stalls, and scenic walks.
- a light-rail streetcar that follows the coastline with ocean views and access to the famous Kamakura outdoor bronze Buddha.



Enoshima Island



Great Buddha, Hase near Kamakura

Day 5-6

CORE ITINERARY

Tokyo > Shizuoka



Thomas Tank Engine steam train replica operating a river valley route near Shizuoka, west of Tokyo on the Pacific Coast.

Taking our first very fast train ride in Japan by the Tokaido Shinkansen, we arrive in Shizuoka day 5. With clear skies, we can see Mt Fuji from the Shinkansen.

We spend the whole of day 6 on a return excursion up the valley of the Ōi river by steam train and ABT train. Choice of steam locomotives includes “Thomas”, “James” or several “standard” black models².



The river valley scenery is particularly good in Spring (cherry blossoms) and Autumn.

Best time for Cherry blossom viewing - Late March, early April

Best time for Autumn Colours - Late November, early December

² Availability of seats, especially on Thomas or James theme trains will depend on booking lead-time. Tour booking lead-time of at least 6 months recommended.

Day 7 - 8

CORE ITINERARY

Shizuoka > Tokyo > Home

In Core Itinerary (without extensions), we return to Tokyo by Shinkansen for one night's stay in Tokyo before flying home.



[SEE NEXT PAGE FOR TOUR EXTENSION OPTION 1](#)

CORE ITINERARY

Day 7 - 9

ITINERARY EXTENSION OPTION 1

Shizuoka > Takayama



Takayama mountain resort town -elaborate floats crossing bridge during the twice annually held Takayama festival³.

From Shizuoka to Nagoya by another Shinkansen ride, then take a diesel electric railcar service up to the central alps town of Takayama.

Takayama is small enough that much of its unique old-style charm can be experienced just by walking around. Visit a Sake brewery, see the Festival floats (either on the street during Festival time, or in a museum at other times).

Go on a guided bicycle tour into the countryside nearby.

A cuisine specialty is “Hida Beef” - not as well known as “Kobe Beef” maybe but probably just as good, if not better.

During our stay here, we take a day return bus ride through mountain passess and tunnels to the World Heritage listed traditional village of ShirakawaGo where dozens of steep thatch roofed farmhouses are maintained in a beautiful mountain valley beside the River Sho (Shokawa).

³ It is necessary to plan at least 6 months ahead to be able to experience this festival.



Shirakawa Go - World Heritage listed traditional village - early Spring 2015. Accessed from Takayama.

Day 10

ITINERARY EXTENSION OPTION 1

Takayama > Tokyo

We travel back to Tokyo for the last night in Japan.

Day 8

[OPTION 1]

Day 11

[OPTION 2]

Tokyo > home

Prepare for departure, last minute shopping. Arrive at Narita Airport late afternoon for evening takeoff.