



JAPAN: CULTURAL KALEIDOSCOPE

14-DAY PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kayak with Mt. Fuji as your backdrop
- Hike the forested trails of Mt. Takao
- Work alongside local farmers in Yamanashi, planting and tending rice paddies while learning about Japanese agriculture and community life
- Explore cultural gems like Yokohama's CupNoodles Museum and design your own instant noodles
- Connect meaningfully with local high school youth
- Experience the dazzling lights and cityscapes of Tokyo
- Stay in a traditional ryokan
- Visit historic shrines and World Heritage temples

ACTIVITY LEVEL

- Light

2026 PROGRAM DATES

- June 28 - July 11
- July 15 - July 28

GET IN TOUCH!

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Discover the heart of Japan on a journey of culture, service and adventure that blends modern life with timeless traditions as you engage with its people, communities and heritage.

OVERVIEW

On this program, explore the vibrant contrasts of Japan, from the cutting-edge innovation of Tokyo to the timeless traditions of Yamanashi's rice fields. Experience the country's natural beauty kayaking near Mt. Fuji and give back through hands-on service in local rice fields. This journey offers a unique blend of culture, adventure and meaningful contribution.





ITINERARY

Actual schedule of activities will vary by program session. The information detailed here is typical for what you can expect to experience; however, service work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather and specific needs of the student group.

DAY 1 : WELCOME TO JAPAN

Konnichiwa! (Hello!) You'll fly into Tokyo where GLA staff will greet you upon arrival. Together, we'll travel to our Home Base and kick off with a GLA orientation before settling into your rooms. In the evening, share your first Japanese dinner with the group and take time to rest and prepare for the exciting journey ahead.

DAY 2: ORIENTATION & TOKYO TOUR

This morning, dive into program orientation and take your first Japanese language class to get familiar with everyday phrases. After lunch, set out on a guided Tokyo tour and step into its spiritual side with a visit to a historic shrine. In the evening, reflect with your first GLA Mentor group on your first full day in Japan.

DAY 3: TEMPLES & TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

This morning, step back in time as you explore Asakusa, one of Tokyo's oldest neighborhoods and visit the iconic Sensō-ji Temple, a vibrant center of culture and tradition. After lunch, take part in a hands-on craft workshop to experience Japanese artistry firsthand.

DAY 4: YOKOHAMA DISCOVERY

Today we head to Yokohama, a vibrant port city blending modern life and cultural heritage. Start at the CupNoodles Museum, where you'll learn about the history of instant noodles, design your own custom CupNoodles, and experience interactive exhibits celebrating creativity and innovation in food. After lunch, participate in a business seminar or networking event to gain insight into Japan's global economy and connect with local professionals.

DAYS 5-7: YAMANASHI COMMUNITY SERVICE

This morning, travel from Tokyo to Yamanashi (2 hours) home to the iconic Mt. Fuji and meet the local community where we'll call home for the next few days. Here we'll support local farmers by assisting them with work on a rice farm, infrastructure support and learning about traditional farming practices. After lunch, continue hands-on activities while connecting with community members and gaining a deeper understanding of rural life in Japan.

DAY 8: KAYAKING NEAR MT. FUJI

This morning, head to the scenic foothills of Mt. Fuji for a kayaking adventure on one of the nearby lakes, such as Lake Kawaguchi. Paddle across calm waters with breathtaking views of Japan's iconic mountain, surrounded by lush forests and serene landscapes.

DAY 9: KAMAKURA DAY TRIP

Today, take a day trip to Kamakura, a coastal city rich in history and culture. Explore its famous temples and shrines, including the iconic Great Buddha (Kōtoku-in), stroll through charming streets filled with traditional shops and experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony at a local tea house.





DAY 10: HIKING MT. TAKAO

Spend the day exploring Mt. Takao, a scenic mountain just outside Tokyo known for its lush forests and beautiful trails. Hike along paths that lead to panoramic views of the city and, on clear days, Mt. Fuji in the distance. Along the way, visit the Yakuo-in Temple nestled on the mountainside and immerse yourself in nature, culture, and Japanese mountain traditions.

DAY 11: LOCAL SCHOOL EXCHANGE

Today, connect with Japanese students through a local high school exchange. Participate in collaborative activities, share cultural insights, and gain a firsthand understanding of daily life, traditions and education in Japan.

DAY 12: ANIME DISTRICT & SUSHI-MAKING

Today we explore Japan's vibrant pop culture with a visit to an anime museum, where you'll dive into the world of animation, beloved characters, and creative storytelling. Then wander through Harajuku, Tokyo's famous fashion and anime district, known for its colorful street style, unique boutiques and youthful energy.

Learn the art of sushi from expert chefs as you roll, shape and taste one of Japan's most iconic culinary traditions. This hands-on experience brings Japanese culture to life through craftsmanship, precision and unforgettable flavors.

DAY 13: TEMPLES, MARKETS & REFLECTION

Visit one final temple and explore a local market for last-minute souvenirs, then spend time with your GLA family reflecting on your journey through Japan and what it has meant to you. In the evening, enjoy a special farewell dinner prepared by local staff, celebrating your Japan experience and the friendships and memories you've made along the way.

DAY 14: DEPARTURE

Today students will travel back to Tokyo's airport. The GLA team will assist with check-in and see the group off as they begin their journeys home. Sayonara, Japan!



NOTICE ON PROGRAM UPDATES

While this program is being planned for this season, some activities or details may change between now and the program start date. Please note that references from past participants and previously published information may not accurately reflect every aspect of this program. Refer to the sample itinerary above or to the GLA website for the most up-to-date version of program activities, and please note that further updates may be made between now and the program start date.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

- **Tuition:** \$6,599
- **Service Hours:** TBA
- **Ages:** 14 - 18
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Hotel Blocks & Ryokan (Traditional Homestay)
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
 - Haneda Airport (HND)

Note on Medication: Most common prescription and over-the-counter medications are allowed in Japan if brought in a one-month supply or less, in original packaging and with a prescription or doctor's note. Some substances are restricted, so families should obtain a permit for entry and consult with their Doctor before travel. If your student is currently taking any medications, please let us know in the application, and our team will work with your family. **Important: Adderall is illegal in Japan and therefore is not allowed to be brought into the country by law. For more information, you can read [here](#).*

GLA HOME BASE

Your Home Base in Japan provides a safe, welcoming space to rest and recharge after each day's discoveries. Stay in comfortable accommodations that reflect the local setting, from modern hotels in Tokyo to cozy traditional homestays. Shared meals and common spaces create the perfect atmosphere for bonding with your fellow travelers and reflecting on the day's adventures.

GLA HOME BASE OVERVIEW

- Pool
 - GLA Home Base 1: Tokyo - No
 - GLA Home Base 1: Yamanashi - No
- Air conditioning
 - GLA Home Base 1: Tokyo - Yes
 - GLA Home Base 1: Yamanashi - Yes
- Remote
 - GLA Home Base 1: Tokyo - No
 - GLA Home Base 1: Yamanashi - Yes

FOOD

Japanese cuisine is a delicious adventure, offering everything from savory sushi and crispy tempura to rich ramen and flavorful yakitori. With its focus on fresh, high-quality ingredients like seafood, rice and vegetables, every meal is a celebration of taste and tradition. Whether you're slurping noodles in Tokyo or enjoying a traditional tea Japanese food offers a unique and unforgettable experience for all palates.

CLIMATE

Summer in Japan is a vibrant and lively season, with warm temperatures averaging 25°C to 32°C (77°F to 90°F). The lush countryside is at its greenest and mountain regions like Yamanashi offer a refreshing escape from the city heat. From kayaking near Mt. Fuji to exploring Tokyo and enjoying cool treats, summer in Japan bursts with energy and unforgettable experiences.

LEADERSHIP

Global Leadership Adventures started as an educational institute, so we continue to think and act like educators—not tour operators—as we deliver life-changing programs. We intentionally weave a leadership curriculum into the daily experience on our programs. Through group discussion, meaningful service, workshops, speakers and excursions, staff guide students to reflect on program events through the lens of leadership, and celebrate outstanding examples of leaders they encounter in the local community. Lending this context to the experience creates opportunities for students to dig deep into their vision, purpose and knowledge of themselves and the world.

ABOUT GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES

Global Leadership Adventures was founded in 2003 by Fred Swaniker, a native of Ghana, TED Fellow and educational entrepreneur whose work has been praised by Barack Obama. Born as a global extension of the revolutionary African Leadership Academy, Global Leadership Adventures now operates programs centered around leadership, sustainable community service projects, and meaningful travel across Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Through life-changing adventures, we strive to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.

GLA HAS BEEN FEATURED IN:

The New York Times

 USA TODAY

 NBC NEWS

The Boston Globe

seventeen





OUR EXPECTATIONS

BE PRESENT | Our mission at GLA is “to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.” To that end, we expect GLA students to maintain high standards of personal behavior and to be open-minded. The culture may be different, sometimes shockingly so. GLA will challenge students as they are expected to work hard and be present physically and mentally for all activities. We also ask students to take a step back from regular use of technology - particularly their smartphones - so as to maximize their engagement with the program and their fellow participants. Students may get hot, dirty and bug-bitten along the way, but their contribution can transform the community. The goal is for each student to return home having had a life-changing experience.

NO TOLERANCE | GLA has a no-tolerance policy towards drugs, alcohol, tobacco and disruptive behavior. Those who violate or are suspected of violating this policy will be immediately dismissed from the program at the sole discretion of GLA staff.

COMMUNITY-LED EXPERIENCES | GLA makes every effort to offer thoughtfully crafted programs for teens and young adults. Detailed planning and exhaustive communications with partners are indispensable parts of our program development process. However, occasionally service and activities are adjusted from session to session, due to weather, changing needs of our local community partners and/or various cultural celebrations and customs. We expect participants to be open-minded and flexible, willing to embrace the experience when plans change. GLA makes every effort to communicate adjustments to students and families with advance notice. We expect you to be open-minded and flexible.

MENTORSHIP | GLA is not a therapy program. Our staff are highly skilled, professional, caring and fun, but they are not licensed therapists. GLA programs can be physically and emotionally demanding, and applicants should be in good physical and mental health.



ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At Global Leadership Adventures, we welcome age-eligible teens who are excited about the opportunity to travel to apply for our programs. To ensure a safe and meaningful experience for everyone in the group, we follow essential eligibility criteria. While our intent is not to be exclusionary, it's important to note that GLA programs are not therapeutic programs and are not able to support struggling teens seeking behavior or mental health outcomes.

Applications are carefully considered and screened to align with these criteria. It is not uncommon for GLA to require supporting documentation or information in the application screening process to confirm eligibility or suitability for program participation. Failure to disclose full medical history may also result in the application not being accepted, additional fees, and/or removal from the program. Please discuss with our team for any further clarification or concerns and visit <https://www.experiencegla.com/policies/essential-eligibility-criteria/> to view the full essential eligibility criteria list.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP

CONTACT US | Want to learn more about Global Leadership Adventures and our available programs? Our Admissions Team has expertise and insights into our slate of program offerings, and we're happy to answer any questions you might have. We have collectively visited or staffed many of our GLA programs around the world, and we have advice to share on everything from getting your travel documents together to what a typical day on a program is like. Call us at 1-858-771-0645 any time during office hours for assistance.

ENROLL NOW | We encourage you to enroll on your 1st choice program as early as you can! In fact, our most popular programs fill up early every year, and many students end up putting off the quick and easy application process only to end up on the waiting list. The best way to ensure that you save your spot is to place your deposit and apply early. You can easily enroll online at www.experiencegla.com/enroll.

