JAPAN: CULTURAL KALEIDOSCOPE

14-DAY PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kayak with Mt. Fuji as your backdrop
- Hike the forested trails of Mt. Takao
- Step into the world of sumo as you meet a real rikishi (sumo wrestler)
- 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
- Experience the dazzling lights, neighborhoods and cityscapes of Tokyo
- Visit historic shrines and World Heritage temples, discovering the traditions and beliefs that have shaped Japan for centuries

ACTIVITY LEVEL

- Light

2027 PROGRAM DATES

- June 24 – July 07
- July 11 – July 24

GET IN TOUCH!

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Discover Japan's incredible contrasts, from Tokyo's vibrant streets to the peaceful countryside of Yamanashi, as you immerse yourself in Japanese traditions, connect with local communities and experience unforgettable adventures near Mt. Fuji.

OVERVIEW

Experience the best of Japan on an unforgettable journey that blends ancient traditions, modern innovation, cultural immersion, and outdoor adventure. From the dazzling streets of Tokyo to the peaceful countryside of Yamanashi, discover a country where centuries-old customs exist alongside cutting-edge technology and vibrant pop culture.

Step beyond the typical tourist experience as you work alongside local farmers in Yamanashi, learning about traditional rice cultivation, sustainable agriculture, and the importance of community. Experience Japan's breathtaking natural beauty as you kayak near the iconic Mt. Fuji and hike scenic mountain trails.

Along the way, explore historic temples and shrines, discover the colorful world of anime and Japanese fashion, try your hand at traditional crafts and learn to prepare authentic Japanese cuisine. Experience the warmth of Japanese hospitality during a stay in traditional accommodations and gain new perspectives through meaningful connections with local communities.

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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

Start your first full day in Japan with an introduction to Japanese language and culture! Learn essential Japanese phrases and discover local customs that will help you connect with the people and places you'll encounter throughout your journey. After lunch, explore the dynamic streets of Tokyo on a guided city tour, where modern innovation meets centuries-old traditions. Visit a historic shrine and gain insight into Japan's spiritual heritage, cultural practices, and the significance of these sacred spaces. In the evening, gather with your GLA Mentor group to reflect on your first impressions, share experiences, and set personal goals for the adventure ahead.

DAY 3: TEMPLES & TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Step back in time as you explore Asakusa, one of Tokyo's most historic and culturally rich neighborhoods. Visit the iconic Sensō-ji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple, and discover the traditions, architecture, and spiritual significance of this vibrant landmark. Wander through the lively streets surrounding the temple, where traditional shops and local crafts offer a glimpse into Japan's fascinating heritage. In the afternoon, unleash your creativity during a hands-on Japanese craft workshop, learning traditional techniques and gaining an appreciation for the artistry, patience, and craftsmanship that are deeply rooted in Japanese culture.

DAY 4: YOKOHAMA ADVENTURE & CUP NOODLE MUSEUM

Today, venture to Yokohama, a dynamic port city where Japanese innovation, creativity and global connections come together. Visit the interactive CupNoodles Museum, where you'll discover the fascinating story behind one of Japan's most recognizable inventions, explore exhibits celebrating creativity and entrepreneurship, and design your very own custom CupNoodles creation.

DAY 5: HIKING MT. TAKAO

Escape the energy of Tokyo and immerse yourself in Japan's natural beauty with a hiking adventure on Mt. Takao, a scenic mountain known for its lush forests, peaceful trails, and rich cultural heritage. Follow winding paths through beautiful woodland, discovering the region's diverse plants and wildlife as you make your way toward breathtaking viewpoints overlooking Tokyo and, on clear days, the iconic Mt. Fuji in the distance. Along the way, visit the historic Yakuo-in Temple, a sacred site nestled into the mountainside, and learn about the connection between nature, spirituality, and Japanese mountain traditions.









DAYS 6-7: YAMANASHI AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

Today, leave the bustling streets of Tokyo behind as we journey approximately two hours to the scenic countryside of Yamanashi, a region known for its breathtaking landscapes, traditional farming communities, and proximity to the iconic Mt. Fuji. Settle into our new surroundings and meet the local community who will welcome us for the next few days.

Working alongside local farmers, take part in hands-on agricultural activities, from tending rice paddies and maintaining farm infrastructure to learning about traditional cultivation methods and sustainable farming practices. Throughout the day, connect with community members, gain insight into the importance of agriculture in Japanese culture, and discover the traditions, challenges, and rhythms of rural life.

DAYS 8-9: KAYAKING NEAR MT. FUJI & MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE

Get ready for an unforgettable outdoor adventure in the breathtaking foothills of Mt. Fuji! Head to one of the region's scenic lakes, such as Lake Kawaguchi, for a kayaking experience surrounded by lush forests, beautiful mountain landscapes, and the peaceful beauty of the Japanese countryside. Paddle across the water, take in the fresh mountain air, and, weather permitting, enjoy spectacular views of Japan's most iconic mountain rising above the landscape. Along the way, discover the natural beauty of the Mt. Fuji region and appreciate the importance of preserving Japan's remarkable natural environments. Whether you're an experienced paddler or trying kayaking for the first time, this adventure offers a memorable opportunity to connect with nature and experience a different side of Japan.

DAY 10: ANIME DISTRICT & SUSHI-MAKING

Dive into the colorful world of Japanese pop culture as you explore Tokyo's exciting blend of anime, fashion, and creativity! Visit an anime museum to discover the artistry, imagination, and storytelling behind Japan's world-famous animation industry. Then, head to the vibrant streets of Harajuku, a hub of youth culture and cutting-edge fashion, where you'll explore quirky boutiques, colorful street styles, and the latest trends that make this neighborhood so iconic.

Continue your cultural adventure with a hands-on sushi-making workshop led by local culinary experts. Learn the techniques, traditions, and attention to detail behind one of Japan's most celebrated culinary arts as you prepare, roll, and taste your own sushi creations. From imaginative pop culture to traditional craftsmanship, today's experiences showcase the creativity and cultural influences that make modern Japan so unique.

DAY 11: EXCURSION TO KAMAKURA

Step back in time with a day trip to Kamakura, a charming coastal city known for its rich history, beautiful temples, and traditional Japanese culture. Once the political center of medieval Japan, Kamakura offers a fascinating glimpse into the country's samurai heritage and spiritual traditions. Visit historic Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, including the iconic Great Buddha (Kōtoku-in), an impressive bronze statue that has stood for centuries. Wander through picturesque streets lined with traditional shops and local crafts before experiencing the art of a Japanese tea ceremony. Learn about the customs, mindfulness, and attention to detail behind this centuries-old tradition as you discover the deeper cultural significance of preparing and sharing tea.









DAYS 12-13: TEMPLES, MARKETS & REFLECTION

As your unforgettable journey through Japan comes to a close, spend your final day soaking up the sights, sounds, and traditions of this fascinating country. Visit one last beautiful temple and explore a local market, where you'll have the chance to pick up souvenirs and gifts to remember your adventure. Take time to reflect with your GLA family on the incredible experiences, friendships, and discoveries that have shaped your journey. From the vibrant streets of Tokyo and breathtaking landscapes near Mt. Fuji to meaningful connections with local communities and Japanese students, celebrate the memories you've made and the new perspectives you've gained. In the evening, gather for a special farewell dinner with your fellow travelers and local staff, sharing stories, laughter, and appreciation for the people, places, and experiences that have made your adventure in Japan so memorable.

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

Experience two sides of Japanese hospitality as you travel between Tokyo and the scenic countryside of Yamanashi. In Tokyo, students will stay in comfortable hotel accommodations, providing a welcoming place to relax and recharge after exploring the city. In Yamanashi, experience traditional Japanese hospitality with a stay in a ryokan, a Japanese-style inn that offers a unique glimpse into local customs and traditions. All accommodations provide communal spaces to connect with fellow students.

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

Discover the incredible flavors of Japanese cuisine. From steaming bowls of ramen and crispy tempura to sushi, rice dishes and regional specialties, every meal offers an opportunity to experience Japan's rich food culture. Students will enjoy a variety of traditional Japanese dishes and familiar options throughout the program. Students with food allergies or specific dietary requirements should contact GLA in advance to discuss their needs and determine whether appropriate accommodations can be made.

CLIMATE

Summer in Japan brings warm temperatures, high humidity, and beautiful green landscapes. In Tokyo, daytime temperatures typically range from 25°C to 33°C (77°F to 91°F), although hotter conditions are possible. June and July also coincide with Japan's rainy season, so students should be prepared for occasional heavy showers and changing weather conditions. The mountainous Yamanashi region may offer cooler temperatures, particularly in the mornings and evenings. Lightweight clothing, comfortable walking shoes, sun protection, and a waterproof jacket are recommended for exploring Japan's cities, countryside and scenic mountain landscapes.

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 environment 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 experience can transform their perspective. 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 out 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.**