



STUDY
ABROAD

SMCCCD Community Travel Program 2024 Japan Cultural and Philanthropic Tour Frequently Asked Questions



CST#2018558-40

TRAVEL ABROAD in 2024

EXPERIENCE JAPAN

April 7 - 18, 2024
Small group travel for adults & lifelong learners
20 spaces available | Cost: \$4,999 average

INFORMATION SESSIONS

MONDAY OCT. 2, 2023 6 p.m. Zoom link: bit.ly/info10-2	TUESDAY OCT. 10, 2023 6 p.m. Zoom link: bit.ly/info10-10	WEDNESDAY OCT. 18, 2023 6 p.m. Zoom link: bit.ly/info10-18
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Questions? Call (650) 738-7098 or email:
Chikako Walker | walkerchikako@smccd.edu
Kelly Li | communitytravel@smccd.edu

bit.ly/gojapan24




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Program/Tour

Are these trips mostly for students?

No. The Community Travel trips are designed for adults or non-students. These trips are not-for-credit and do not involve taking a class. A mandatory pre-departure orientation is required for all participants before departure.

We are senior citizens, quite healthy and mobile, but are there other participants, that is, folks right out of high school?

The age range of participants from the last tour was from 40 – 70, and since the Community Travel trips aren't offered for credit, college-age students do not usually enroll.

If we wanted to come early or stay a few more days, is that possible?

Yes, absolutely. You would need to arrange the independent travel separately from the group dates and the tour operator will inform you when to meet our group.

What are the dates of the trips and costs?

The Japan tour is from April 7 to 18, 2024 and the program fee is \$4,999.

Does the program provide travel insurance?

Yes, you will be covered by a personal accident travel policy.

Why is San Mateo County Community College District and Skyline College offering these trips?

For over 30 years, SMCCCD and Skyline College has a Study Abroad Program for students which offers customized short-term study abroad courses for credit for students. The program received many requests from local San Mateo County residents who wanted to participate in these programs but not take the class for credit, purchase textbooks, and receive a grade and academic transcript. The Community Travel Program was designed with this concept and many programmatic changes to the itinerary of the tours. For example, a student study abroad course is fast-paced and each day is packed with a full itinerary to meet the student learning outcomes of the course, while a Community Travel Program is intentionally slow-paced, culturally explorative, and focuses on a

leisure/vacation aspect of the trip with the added benefit of a faculty/staff Program Ambassador leading the group.

What is the 'social impact' of these tours?

San Mateo County Community College District would like every student to participate in a life-changing study abroad opportunity; however, Study Abroad is **financially** inaccessible to many community college students. With the Community Travel Program, \$500 of your program fee is tax-deductible and funds the San Mateo County Community Colleges Foundation Study Abroad Scholarship Fund for students to apply for this funding to make their study abroad dream a possibility.

Who is TLA and what is their relationship to the SMCCCD?

The Learning Adventure (TLA) serves as the tour operator of the 2024 Japan Community Travel trip. San Mateo County Community College District and Skyline College contracts the tour logistics to TLA, which has strong connections and high-quality services in Asia, including Japan.

How large a group will this trip be?

Community Travel Program tours are considered private tours and limited to maximum of 20 participants. We typically like to keep it small and in the previous trip, we had 17 participants.

I saw an ad for these trips on social media and in the local paper. Do you promote these trips beyond the college?

Yes. These trips are intended for the public and not students. We have promoted the Community Travel Program on [Facebook through our Facebook page](#), Instagram, and the San Mateo Daily Journal.

Application

How much do I have to pay for the enrollment deposit and when is the final balance due?

A \$450 deposit is due at the time of application. The balance of program fees is due to TLA by 1/1/2024 for the Japan tour.

I would like to apply and pay my enrollment deposit. Where are the secure application links?

Click [HERE](#) to pay the \$450 deposit.

Is the application portal secure?

Yes. You should see the secure 'https' in the URL of your web browser.

What forms of payment are accepted by TLA for the enrollment deposit and balance of payment?

You will be able to pay the deposit via credit/debit card.

Can SMCCCD and Skyline College cancel the trips due to low enrollment?

Yes. We need 10 participants per trip for them to go ahead. SMCCCD may cancel the trip should we not reach 10 paying participants.

Will SMCCCD stop accepting applications at any point?

Yes. When we have reached the maximum of 20 paying participants, we will close registrations and the trip will be considered 'full.'

What is the refund policy?

- The application and the \$450 deposit are due on **November 1st 2023**. If a participant withdraws on or before November 1st 2023, they shall receive a refund of: All fees paid less a \$150 processing fee.
- If a participant withdraws after November 1st 2023, but on or before January 8th 2024, they shall receive a refund of all fees paid less the \$450 deposit.
- The total program fee is due on **January 8th 2024**. If a participant withdraws after January 8th 2024, there is no refund.
- If a participant withdraws once the program has begun, there is no refund, unless The Learning Adventure suspends the program.

Transportation

Do I have to take the TLA flight?

No. There will be no group flight reservation. TLA will recommend some flights, but the participants need to book their own flight. TLA will arrange airport pick-up for the participants.

Are we responsible for the bullet train and the private coach?

No, TLA will arrange all of that and book your hotels and activities.

Accommodations

Where will I stay?

You will stay in 4-star hotels with other participants. The program fee includes double-occupancy. The hotels will be located in the center of the city and will be varied in size and style.

Can I have a single room?

Yes. We have availability on single rooms, and they can only be guaranteed upon payment of a supplement (\$1,300).

Can I check into my hotel before the program starts if I am arriving in Japan early?

TLA cannot supply you with accommodation until the official start date of the program. However, if you plan on arriving early, they can give the hotel name that the group will be staying at during the program, so you may book your accommodation at the same hotel or at one close by.

Can I choose my own roommate?

Yes. Simply indicate your roommate preference when completing the application form and have your prospective roommate do the same. If you decide to room with someone after your enrollment form has been submitted, please have both participants email communitytravel@smccd.edu with your request.

How is my roommate chosen?

TLA allocates roommates based on the information provided on the online enrollment forms completed by every participant. First, we look to see if a participant has requested a particular roommate, and if they have, we house them with that person. We then put participants with similar routines together, similar likes and dislikes, hobbies, etc.

When will I find out who my roommate is?

Rooming assignments will be notified during the pre-departure orientation at Skyline College in February to March 2024.

How many people are there per room?

Two per room with separate beds. Single rooms are available. Again, participants

should request these and be prepared to pay a supplement.

Are the rooms coed?

No, rooms are all shared by people of the same sex unless participants are a couple and have requested to be roommates.

What are the meals included in the program fee?

All the meals are included.

Will there be food for dietary restrictions, such as vegan or vegetarian options?

Yes. TLA is very experienced at ordering for all sorts of dietary restrictions.

Communication

Will I be able to access the Internet?

Yes, of course. All hotels will have wireless internet access free of charge. There are many bars/cafes throughout the country allowing you to access the Internet.

How can people contact me when I am in Japan?

Your smart phone can be activated for a global plan that costs \$10/day (Verizon). Check with your U.S. phone carrier on these rates. **The majority of our participants use Skype/Facetime/Facebook Messenger or similar to talk with family and friends back home for free, using an Internet connection in Japan.**

General

Do I need a passport?

You will need a valid passport to travel abroad. If you have a passport that will expire during your program or within four months after the end of your program, renew it now. You will not be able to board your flight without a valid passport in hand.

Skyline College is a designated U.S. Department of State Passport Acceptance Facility and you can apply for your new passport through the college: www.skylinecollege.edu/passport or email skylinepassportservices@smccd.edu.

If you need to renew your passport, go to http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/renew/renew_833.html

Do I need a visa?

No, not for this trip if you are a U.S. citizen. You may contact communitytravel@smccd.edu if you are not a U.S. citizen to discuss it.

What should I take with me?

Not too much! Participants always find that they brought clothing that they never wear and toiletries that they could have easily bought in Japan.

If you are on medication, you should bring enough to last you for the program as well as a copy of the prescription in case you need a refill.

The weather in April in Japan is usually 50-70 ° F, so bring appropriate clothes. It is best to bring clothes that you can layer to be appropriate for all kinds of weather. You will do a lot more walking than you are used to, so bring comfortable shoes. You will not need much "dressy" clothing, but bring an outfit in case you need it. Remember to leave space in your suitcase for souvenirs you will buy.

You may bring some cash (Japanese Yen) in case you have to pay cash at some small stores in Japan. You could withdraw that from an ATM in Japan, but sometimes the exchange rate is not so good.